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WORKROOM OF THE PRINCESS ALEXIS KARA-GEORGEVITCH AT VRNTSE

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FOR THE BETTER HOUR

BY

PRINCESS ALEXIS KARAGEORGEVITCH

LONDON
CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LIMITED
1917

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TO

THE HEROIC SERBIAN NATION

Printed in Great Britain

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FOR THE BETTER HOUR

AND THE RESURRECTION OF SERBIA

CHAPTER I

VRANJSKA-BANJA

VRANJSKA-BANJA, a small village on the main line of the Belgrade-Salonika railway, was destined to be our home during the first months of this great war. Situated a little south-east of Nish, it lies nestled in a beautiful valley of the Balkan chain of mountains which form the dividing line between Serbia and Bulgaria. The road from the station to the village, about three miles distant, is bordered on either side with magnificent horse-chestnut trees, planted closely together, the interlacing branches forming a picturesque continuous arbour.

In summer the luxuriant green, transpierced by the sun, forms a network of cool shadows

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and warm light. Autumn changes the scene, repainting it in golden yellow tints, whose glory recalls the effect of the aureole round the saints' heads in early Byzantine paintings. Beautiful again, in strong contrast, is this country road when frost and snow cover the trees, and a brilliant sun throws its lustre on the scene.

The tiny village, when its trees and houses were covered with light crispy snow, reminded me of the quaint frosted Christmas cards of my youth. Through this village flows a little river which adds greatly to its charm, as well as to its material welfare; one of its springs, with a temperature of 90° Reaumur, has wonderful curative properties, and, before the advent of railways, the rich Turks from Constantinople came this long distance in carriages, to avail themselves of the waters. It was interesting to find here a very good bath-house, with sunken marble basins, after the old Roman style. This hot stream has another value: the peasant women utilise it for their washing, coming from far and near with bundles of soiled clothes on their backs. They pass the morning in washing, after which the clothes are spread out on the banks to dry

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in the sun; the washerwomen then seek out their friends, and sit about on the stones chatting and making merry, while eating their frugal mid-day meal. Before sundown the clothes, not always entirely dry, are folded in bundles and again strapped to their owners' backs for the return journey home.

No praise is too high for the wonderful Serbian peasant women, who did the harvesting during the war, with the aid of a few old men and very young boys. All the day they worked in the sun, for in Serbia there is an abundance of sun, only resting for an hour at noon under the trees, where their babes remained in improvised hammocks.

An incident which interested me greatly, and which I watched from our villa, proves the high spirit and great courage of these women. After a severe storm which sent the mountain streams tumbling down in great fury, the little river was driven out of its channel at one point. In the early morning an army of women were at work, up to their knees in the water, digging, and dragging huge stones to dam the stream into its normal channel again; hours of this strenuous work accomplished its purpose, and the women departed to their homes,

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as might be supposed, to rest after the long hard day's work.

Imagine my astonishment at seeing them return in the late afternoon, dressed in their best. A beautiful picture they made in their gay-striped skirts and wonderful aprons, with snow-white blouses emerging from gorgeously embroidered bolero bodices: vivid kerchiefs covered their heads, and the whole was set off by strings of old coins, gold or silver, around their necks, numerous in proportion to the wealth of the owner.

At sunset and during the still clear softness of the twilight, in a large open space by the bridge, they danced their national dance, the kolo, to the music of a single violin. In the kolo all the participants join hands, and with a slow rhythmic movement make two paces to the left and one to the right, or *vice versâ*, the leader winding the undulating line into intricate figures, always keeping the same step.

The weird monotonous strains of their sad music, as it was wafted across the stream to me, hardly seemed to lend themselves to dancing, nor to suggest any form of gaiety; rather, they are the appropriate accompaniment to the national epic poems which immortalise

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THE SERBIAN GUSLE.

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the sufferings of this free-spirited people when under the domination of the Turks. It is said that in this strangely individual music Liszt found the inspiration for his best Rhapsodies, and Beethoven for his Pastoral Symphony.

The Serbians are a music-loving race, and every peasant house has its gusle, a musical instrument slightly resembling a long slender mandoline, with the difference that it has but one string, and is played resting upon the knee, and with a peculiarly shaped bow.

In the clear moonlight, after the day's work is done, each family assembles in the house-yard, and to the monotonous accompaniment of the gusle, they chant their historical poems. The women and girls, each with her distaff, spin industriously even while they sing, for,

> "A man works till set of sun,
> A woman's work is never done."

The gathering-place for the winter evenings is around the hearth, in the large family room; the grandfather, invariably in the place of honour, tells historical tales of the past glory of Serbia, and the young men recite their legends and sing of the great deeds of their tragic heroes. In this interesting way the

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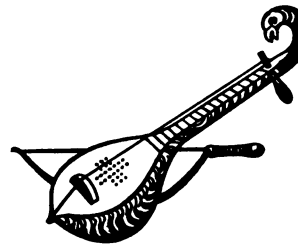
history of the country has been handed down from generation to generation.

Tragedy has now silenced their singing, and is adding a still more tremendous epic to their history, and in the meantime the gusle hangs mutely silent, waiting " For the better hour."



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Chapter II

SERBIAN PEASANTS

Our daily walks through those beautiful valleys, and occasionally over the mountains, were never devoid of some interesting incident. The peasantry, unconscious of conventions, do not hesitate to stop anyone on the road, and after the usual greeting, " Dobar dan " (good day), enter into easy and friendly conversation, asking personal questions, and making frank revelations on their own part. Often we were invited to enter their simple homes, and this was always the occasion for a certain ritual dear to the Serbian heart, the serving of the " slatko " (Serbian for sweet).

The daughter of the house, if there is one, hands round a tray on which are as many glasses of water as there are persons in the room, also as many spoons, and two dishes of home-made preserved fruit, wonderful to behold, but too sweet for alien palates ; each person takes a spoonful of preserve, places his

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spoon in a receptacle for that purpose, then takes a sip of water, and replaces the glass on the tray.

After this appears another tray, with small cups of Turkish coffee, and glasses of liqueur, usually schlivovitza, the liqueur of the country, made from plums. It is considered very bad manners to refuse the slatko, or not to sit down after entering a Serbian house by invitation.

The three-mile road from the village of Vranjska-Banja to the station, under the shade of the thickly branching chestnut trees, was a walk we much enjoyed. On either side there stretched away into the distance rich flat meadows, where grazed flocks of gentle sheep, beautiful lazy cattle, and herds of frisky goats.

Little girls looked after the cattle and goats, but the sheep were watched over by diminutive shepherd boys. Exposed to all weathers, to sun, wind and rain, these sturdy lads develop into the strong brave soldiers who endure hunger, cold, and long difficult marches, with out a murmur of complaint.

These little children while away the long hours of watching by making music on a

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primitive little pipe, called in Serbian "frula." All their tunes are in a minor key, so inexpressibly touching to a sensitive heart.

A young American in charge of a large ward of wounded Serbian soldiers told me that his men sang every evening to the accompaniment of the frula. One song which they particularly loved, and often sang, invariably brought the tears close behind his eyes. Intensely desirous of knowing its words and story, he asked an Austrian prisoner, a Croate, who spoke Serbian, to translate it into German. Great was his astonishment to find that it was a gay and happy love story. Feeling that his emotions had been falsely played upon, he was for ever after chary of giving way to the delusive charm of sad Serbian airs.

When not inclined to go far abroad, we walked in the village park, which lies in a pine forest, on the side of one of the lower mountains. So gently do the narrow paths wind their way from one beautiful view to another, and so softly does the foot fall on their carpet of pine needles, that one reaches the mountain top unconscious of having made any effort. The gorgeous sunsets seen from this height will live always in my memory.

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Across the river, on the opposite hillside, stands the primitive little white wooden church; behind it another park, wildly beautiful in Nature's divine disorder, slopes up to a crest where clings, like a swallow to a rock, a little rustic summer house.

Sitting here, dominating the luxuriant beauty of the changeful landscape, one is overcome by wonder at the extravagant bounty of Nature; for as far as eye can see are fertile valleys, mountains cultivated to their very top, silver streams flashing from dark rocky channels, tiny white villages hanging on the hillsides, sombre masses of pine woods alternating with the vivid green of the mountain meadows.

Toward sundown, far away on the horizon rises a dark spot against the flaming western sky: swiftly it approaches, a dense flock of rooks sweeps by, darkly over-shadowing our smiling little village, and in its passage completing the charm of the scene by adding one vague touch of mystery.

Tziganes.

On the outskirts of Vranjska-Banja is a settlement of those nomadic people, the Tziganes. They live in miserable dirty huts,

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all ages crowded together, from the old crones who run the settlement, down to the innumerable children swarming like flies everywhere, and always chattering like magpies.

The men and women are clad in picturesque rags, but the children have seldom more than a torn shirt to cover their bronze bodies, and one sees many a pretty little mite in only Nature's garb, adorned by a string of bright-coloured beads.

The gipsy women work at basket-making, also wash and prepare the flax for weaving. The men by profession are tinkers, and patch the pots and pans of the villagers and peasants. By instinct they are thieves, so that when chickens, vegetables, and anything else available disappear suspicion justly falls on them; they are also the only beggars in Serbia.

At night the air is filled with their wild exhilarating music, rendered so familiar everywhere by the numerous Tzigane bands which play in restaurants. They are born musicians, and the merest boy can bring soul-touching tones from the most inferior violin. In groups of three or four they wander from village to village, playing at the coffee-houses, and at fêtes and weddings.

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Dirty and repellent as the Tziganes are, their dark skin, brilliant white teeth, and beautiful eyes, invest them with an indescribable charm. One wonders what doom the race may have inherited from some previous incarnation that it should be deprived of a native country, and be so undesired in all lands.

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Chapter III

VRANJA, SKOPLJE, NISH

Vranja, a small town of about 15,000 inhabitants, lies high on the slope of a mountain, ten miles to the west of Vranjska-Banja. It has a commanding view, but nothing of particular interest to distinguish it from many other small towns in Serbia. There are the usual one-storey houses, and although the streets are still paved with cobble stones, progress is noticeable since the Turk was pushed back to his own special quarters.

Every Saturday a fair is held there, to which the peasants come from all the surrounding country, to sell their produce and animals. The preceding day all the roads leading to Vranja are encumbered by the slowly moving defile: the peasants trudging along on foot, making use of the horses, mules, donkeys and oxen to carry their wares; the sheep are driven, and piggy, squeaking fiercely, and stubbornly refusing to move faster than

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his own leisurely waddle, is pulled along by his perspiring owner. If night overtake them on the way peasants and animals sleep by the roadside until reminded by the dawn that their goal is still several miles distant.

On these market days, the town, filled with this turbulent crowd, becomes a veritable Babel, in which the Oriental note is supplied by the Turkish women, dressed in their voluminous baggy trousers, coloured jackets, and gaily striped belts. A mystery never to be solved, however, is how they contrive to walk in their peculiar sandals with high wooden heels, only held to the feet by loose straps over the instep.

In the large square and in the principal street are grouped the peasants with their wares. Always in their own particular place on the kerb are the women who sell the attractive white cotton material with coloured stripes, which the Serbians use for towelling and other household purposes. Others, again, have beautiful table squares and bed covers. These are not only woven by the women themselves, but the dyeing of the stripes is also done by them with home-made dyes, which do not wash out.

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The artistic nature of these women is shown in the marvellous colours they obtain, and in the extraordinary taste with which they arrange the striping of varied colours, arriving at a perfectly harmonious effect in these articles of household adornment.

Most beautiful of all, however, are the embroidered articles, for the Serbian women have excelled in this art for centuries.

Urosh the Great, who reigned from the year 1242 to 1276, married a French princess, Hélène of Anjou, and she it was, with her ladies in waiting, who first instructed the Serbian women in the art of embroidery.

In Belgrade a school has long existed for the development of this work, and there the young peasant girls are taught to execute the jealously guarded classic Byzantine designs.

After the great retreat a large workroom, called "La Maison Serbe," was founded in Paris for Serbian refugee women; looms were provided to enable them to weave their material and rugs; here are made also embroidered blouses, children's frocks and other attractive articles, which find ready sale in Europe and America.

This, to me, pleasant digression, has taken

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us a long way from the Vranja fair, which continues with its hubbub and confusion until the day wanes, when the same crowd, laughing and joyous, makes its way home, in a whirl of noise, dust and colour, rendered more fantastic by the brilliancy of the gorgeous sunset.

Skoplje.

Summer had matured into a beautiful warm autumn when we visited the town of Skoplje, which is about 100 miles south-west of Vranjska-Banja. It has a population of 35,000 souls, and is the second largest town in New Serbia. Its Turkish name, Uskub, is more familiar to the world, for, until the war of 1912, when Serbia won back her lost territories in Macedonia, it had been under the domination of the Turks for more than four centuries. Historically it is interesting, for here it was in the year 1346, that Douchan, the greatest figure in the national history, was crowned Tzar of Serbia. This great ruler formed a code of laws and ordinances which has been a valuable source of information on the state of civilisation in the Balkans at the end of the middle ages, and is proof that

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Serbia was not behind other European States at that time.

Nature has been lavish to Skoplje, which lies in a fertile plain almost surrounded by mountains and intersected by the wide, swiftly flowing Vardar. Fruit and flowers grow in abundance in this marvellous climate.

On an eminence crowning the town are the remains, now used as barracks, of the fortress of Tzar Douchan, and the name of this great ruler is borne by an imposing bridge over the Vardar. Passing along the banks of the river and through the narrow streets (paved with the inevitable cobble stones), one sees nothing but the usual low insignificant houses and buildings. It will not be an irremediable misfortune if the Bulgars leave material destruction in their wake, for Serbia will have her resurrection, and Skoplje, from her important position as a railway centre, and with all her natural endowments, will rise up in beauty and glory.

NISH.

Nish had now become the capital of Serbia, since, in the first days of the war, the bombardment of Belgrade had driven the Government, the diplomatic corps, and the more prominent

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families to establish themselves here. With an ordinary population of 25,000, it had now four times that number; under these conditions, it goes without saying that discomfort was experienced.

The importance of Nish is due to the fact that it is the junction of the main lines of railway between Belgrade, Constantinople, and Salonika. The streets are broad, and there are large squares, but the houses are low, and the buildings unimportant. One is bumped and rocked over the same cobble-stone pavement here as in the other small towns of Serbia.

There was here an interesting eighteenth century Turkish palace, which, before the conquest of Nish in 1877, served as the official residence of the Turkish governor. Some of its rooms had panelling and ceilings of wonderful wood-carving, and in the extensive garden stood a very rare Arabian marble fountain. One hears now, that the woodwork and fountain have been taken to Bulgaria and that the palace has been destroyed.

A gruesome monument is the Tower of Skulls, erected by the Turks, where, inserted amongst the stones of the walls, are the skulls

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SERBIAN SOLDIERS DANCING.

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of Serbian patriots, who, with their famous leader, Stephan Sindjelitch, lost their lives defending the fortification in the year 1809. When the Turks, advancing over the dead bodies of their comrades, scaled the walls, Sindjelitch, determined not to fall into their hands, dead or alive, fired the powder magazine and blew the entire fort into the air, destroying himself, with his friends and enemies.

A short drive takes one out to Niska-Banja, where there is a splendid bathing establishment. The alley of approach is bordered on either side by fine trees, originally planted by the famous Midhat Pasha, once the all-powerful favourite of Sultan Abdul Hamid. Every one remembers the tragic fate of this onetime favourite who, having displeased his master, was murdered by Imperial order. As proof of the certain execution of his command the Sultan required that the head be sent to him at Constantinople. A farcical touch was given to this Salome-like proceeding by the arrival of the head, not in a biblical charger, but in ultra-modern fashion, carefully packed in a neat wooden box, and meticulously labelled, "Fragile," "Objet Japonais."

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Chapter IV

SECOND INVASION

Dreamy little Vranjska-Banja was roused into abnormal activity in the month of November by the opening of two hospitals.

In Serbia, as even the lighting of a fire on the hearth calls for a pretty prayer from the housewife, an event so important as the opening of these hospitals received the blessing of the priests. It was an interesting ceremony, beautiful in its expression of the simple but perfect faith of these people, and did not Jesus Christ tell His disciples to have the faith of little children?

We were all hard worked those days, for the wounded were arriving in numbers which taxed, beyond their utmost, the capacity of the primitive buildings and the endurance of the hospital staff. The little beds were placed two together in all the wards, thereby enabling us to put three men in two beds; even so,

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many poor fellows found their resting-place on the floor.

When the trains discharged their freight of men, whether prisoners or wounded, it was with great difficulty we could distinguish friend from foe, for all presented much the same appearance in dress and colour.

Already depleted by the wars of 1912 and 1913 Serbia had been obliged to put her armies in the field without proper equipment, and, in many cases, uniforms lacking, the peasants wore their ordinary costume of brown homespun cloth, heavily braided in black.

During the summer things went well enough, but autumn brought the pinch of hardship, and the men, suffering from the need of more clothing, supplied themselves from their fallen enemies; consequently, every wounded Serbian presented to the eye a curious medley of uniforms and colour, the cap being his one distinguishing mark; for that his national pride forbade him to exchange.

So accustomed had our eyes become to the Austrian grey-blue, that only when we were all in procession from one hospital to the other, on the day of benediction, did we discover to

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our astonishment and chagrin that the Serbian soldier carrying the stoup of holy water was dressed, with ironical inappropriateness, in complete Austrian uniform; this was an eloquent reminder of the state of destitution to which this gallant little country had been reduced.

Medical and hospital supplies were lacking also, but this fact did not deter those brave, splendid men from undergoing the necessary operations; they endured their enforced sufferings silently and stoically, since no anæsthetics could be had.

The following remarks made by an American Red Cross doctor better illustrate the courage of the soldiers than pages of description can do. "My word!" he said, "but I tell you these men are great. I feel that small beside them that I could hide myself. Pain! Suffering! You've not seen bravery till you've seen these men suffer. I'll take off a hand, an arm, a leg, without anæsthetics, mind you, and will the fellow budge? Not an eyelid. If you hear him say 'Kuku lele' (oh, dear), that's as much as you'll hear, and not often that much. They'll die without a sound, unless it is to thank you if they can before they go. Where this race of

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soldiers sprang from I don't pretend to know, but I tell you right now they're God's own men."

It was early in August, 1914, that the Austro-Hungarians had commenced their bombardment of Belgrade and Semendria. Their many attempts to cross the Danube had been repulsed with heavy losses, one Austrian regiment having been practically wiped out. On the 12th, however, they succeeded in forcing their way into the country at several points, and there was severe fighting until the 19th, when the Austrians were compelled to give way. Their retreat developed into a rout, and on the 24th, entirely rid of her unwelcome and inhuman visitors, Serbia breathed a sigh of relief.

The atrocities committed by the Austro-Hungarians during this first invasion are without parallel in modern history. To cite one example: in the village of Dvorska the soldiers tied a man to a mill wheel, and, as a game of skill, knifed him as he was being whirled round and round.

Austria could not accept this defeat as definite, so returned to the charge in November, forcing her way into the north-western part of

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the country, but this time with an overpowering army.

The poor Serbians totally lacking ammunition for rifles, as well as for artillery, were compelled to retreat, and the soldiers, whose courage and *moral* had never been lowered, neither liked nor understood retreating.

It was a terrible moment, but like a ray of sunshine in a dark sky came the announcement that the much-needed ammunition had arrived at Salonika.

Carrying out a well-timed Machiavellian manœuvre, 2,000 Bulgarian Comitadjis attacked with guns and overpowered the few territorials guarding the bridge at Stroumitza, on the only railway track from Salonika into Serbia. After mutilating these men with a cruelty worse than that of wild beasts, they succeeded in partially destroying the bridge before Serbian soldiers could reach the spot in sufficient numbers to drive them back. Needless to say the bridge was soon repaired, the army received its ammunition, and at this psychological moment the old warrior King appeared among his troops, inspiring them to a superhuman effort. With a sudden, unexpected and violent offensive they drove the enemy

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back in great confusion and with terrible losses.

The Austrians had been several weeks advancing about eighty miles into Serbia; the Serbians were but twelve days in driving them back that same distance.

When Voyvode Putnik was asked how he had effected the crushing defeat of the Austro-Hungarian troops, he answered briefly, "All my strategy consisted in placing the national Serbian mud between the enemy's fighting line and their impedimenta."

On the 14th of December Belgrade was again Serbian, after having been for thirteen days annexed to the Austro-Hungarian Empire: all the enemy had been swept from the country with the exception of 60,000 prisoners. These, with hundreds of guns and vast army stores, were the prize of the gallant Serbians, and the price which the *débâcle* had cost Austria.

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CHAPTER V

STORY OF BIRTCHANINE

AMONG those who in these difficult moments left their regiments to go to the protection of their families was young Birtchanine, one of the descendants of an old Serbian family of splendid heroic traditions.

This family, who in 1804 gave to the awakening Serbia the famous Ilia Birtchanine, had for many generations inhabited the beautiful village of Souvodagne, situated at the foot of the picturesque mountain of Medvednik, south-east of Valjevo.

In this epoch of 1804 the large province of Valjevo was administered, under a Turkish governor, by two Serbian princes, one of whom was Ilia Birtchanine, great-grandfather of the hero of the present story. Tall, broad-shouldered and remarkably handsome, this prince was a splendid figure in his gold-embroidered dolman. At his side gleamed a gold-inlaid Damascus blade, and he carried

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two pistols set with precious stones, masterpieces of the Sarajevo armourer. With his sunburnt face and fierce moustache Ilia was the true type of the legendary Serbian hero. Thus, armed and resplendent, he appeared in the town of Valjevo attended by a troop of mountaineers, when the Turkish dahi, Mehmed Aga Fotchitch, was passing through.

It was the custom for these Serbian governors to enter the presence of the dahi unarmed, with hands crossed on their breast, and bowing in token of submission; this the haughty Birtchanine refused to do, nor did the janissaries dare to try to disarm him. The subtle dahi cloaked his anger, and, temporising, gave the order for him to enter; handsome and proud, Ilia swaggered in with his right hand resting on his shining yatagan, flung down a bag of coins before the dahi and said, "I greet you from the people, who for the last time send you the taxes; pillaged and plundered as they are by your greedy and blood-thirsty soldiery they have nothing more to give." The Aga was perceptibly uneasy at these words, and the defiant manner of Birtchanine frightened him.

Returning to Belgrade he called a council

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of his Turkish colleagues, after which Ilia Birtchanine became the object of their special attention. His opinion was constantly requested on matters touching the needs of the province, and costly gifts were showered upon him.

A few months later the Aga, arriving at Valjevo, invited Birtchanine to visit him informally, without escort, telling him that he would meet the other Serbian governor and that all three would quietly discuss different questions relating to the province. According to custom, the Aga also gave his sacred word of honour that no harm would come to his guest. With noble confidence Ilia presented himself to the Aga, alone and unarmed, but all too late he realised the tragedy of the situation; there he found his brother governor in chains, and two days later they were both beheaded in the small square of Valjevo. At the same time fifty Serbian princes and notables were beheaded at Belgrade.

The dahis hoped by these proceedings to intimidate the Serbs and to assure themselves a long reign of tranquillity. The effect, however, was the contrary, for near the end of this terrible month of January, 1804, Kara-George

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was proclaimed supreme chief of the Serbian nation.

The battle against the oppressor of the Serbs had commenced, not to be terminated until 100 years later.

Of such a race came the young Birtchanine, who in this present war was fighting against a new and more cruel oppressor. Desperate with anxiety for the safety of his family he left his regiment and made his way to Souvodagne, the village where he first saw the light of day, for there he would find his old grandfather, another Ilia Birtchanine, head of the family.

Tired after a difficult journey and with an aching heart, he at last arrived at Souvodagne. Going at once to his grandfather he knelt and kissed his hands. The latter, drawing himself up, said to the young deserter in a voice tender and firm, but full of reproach, "Why are you here, my son?" "Do not reproach me, grandfather, for all is lost. They are as numerous as the leaves on the trees of the forest; they pour in from all sides, from everywhere they pour in like the torrents and no one can stop them, and how can one stop them? Their cannons roar so loud that the earth trembles, and ours are silent. One says,

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'It is the order,' but we well know what that means. Yes, grandfather, we have no ammunition, poor country! And then thousands of women, children, and old white-haired people are flying before the enemy, encumbering the roads, all crying and trembling with cold; and then one idea took possession of me. I saw you, our dear little ones, I saw you all, wandering in this dreadful weather, crossing the mountains, and then I left, and here I am. But do not blame me, do not reproach me, grandfather, I am so unhappy, so miserable."

Old Birtchanine listened to his grandson, and large tears rolled down his wrinkled face. "Yes, it is terrible, my son, but what you have done is wrong. You forget that you are a Birtchanine, and that three of your uncles have already fallen for our country. Do you wish, then, to dishonour our name and the memory of your great-grandfather, Ilia? Go back to your regiment, my child: the commanders are good; tell them my words and they will pardon you. No, you are a Birtchanine; you cannot be a deserter. Go, or you will never have my blessing."

Young Birtchanine fell on his knees before his grandfather, and covering his hands with

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kisses, stammered through his tears, "Forgive me, forgive me, grandfather. I will return to my regiment, and try to be worthy of you, of my uncles, and worthy of Ilia."

The old man kissed his grandson on the forehead, his last kiss. At the end of two days Birtchanine rejoined his regiment, and, although broken by fatigue and mental suffering, he went at once to his captain. "Where do you come from?" was the latter's first question. Birtchanine, in a voice filled with emotion, related his odyssey in all its details. "By law I should send you before a council of war," said the commander, "but I will not. I will forgive you, on condition that you always remember the sacred words of your brave grandfather." "I promise, my captain," replied young Birtchanine, and, turning on his heel, went out comforted to join his comrades.

A few days after his return came the great news that a sufficient quantity of ammunition had arrived, and was already on its way to the front. Faces brightened, hearts lightened, and the epic songs sounded again from thousands of exulting voices.

At last, on the 19th of November, at four o'clock in the afternoon, came the order from

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the General Staff for an offensive all along the front. The next morning, at seven o'clock precisely, the offensive commenced under the best auspices, and ended after a few days in the complete and remarkable *débâcle* of the Austro-Hungarian armies.

But, to come back to the hero of our story, the double pardon of his grandfather and his captain had completely changed young Birtchanine. Full of the vigour and spirit of his ancestors, from the day of his return he was in all the fiercest fighting—not one of the first, but the first of all; loved by his superiors and adored by his comrades. He was made a corporal, and a few days after promoted to the rank of sergeant. The gold medal for valour was pinned to his tunic by his captain in front of the whole regiment. At the head of his platoon he was indefatigable in pursuit. The general advance had brought him near Souvodagne, when he pushed on and captured an enemy battery at the point of the bayonet. He also fell upon a Magyar battalion and seized its regimental flag, but was, unfortunately, mortally wounded. He felt his end near, but by the force of his iron will and by the help of his comrades he managed to reach his battalion

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with his precious trophy. Tottering and deathly pale he appeared before his captain, and gathering his little remaining strength, and in a voice more and more feeble, said, "My captain, we are very near to Souvodagne; to-morrow you will be there; go, I pray you, and say to my grandfather, that I have religiously observed his words, that I die worthy of the name I bear, and that I died as the Birtchanines are in the habit of dying." At these last words of the dying hero the captain placed the farewell kiss on his cold brow, as did also his comrades.

The next day the commander, with a heavy heart, went to Souvodagne to fulfil these last sacred wishes. At the wide-open gates of Birtchanine's home he saw a crowd of mourning women and old men. "What is going on here?" he asked, and an old, white-haired man answered, "A few days ago, towards evening, an Austrian regiment, lost in the mists, fell upon the village; the soldiers entered the houses by force and brought all the men before their commander. He asked us different questions about our army which old Birtchanine answered as only he was capable of doing. Irritated by his replies, the Austrian

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commander said, 'Ah, well! since you will not tell us where to find the First Army, you shall guide us there. Woe to you if you do not show us the shortest way!' 'I must first know where you wish to go,' said Birtchanine. 'To Kragouyevatz, and by the most direct route,' replied the commander angrily. 'Ah! you want to go to Kragouyevatz! Never! Never! I, old Birtchanine, say so; ask the men whom you have brought here, if I do not speak the truth.'

"At these words and at a sign from the commander the soldiers threw themselves on Birtchanine and ill-treated him in a pitiable manner, but he, strong as a rock, never uttered one word. His body lay there covered with wounds; we others were also badly treated, but not as he. After their departure we removed the body of Birtchanine to his home, where he died without regaining consicousness."

The captain entered, and in a large family room, surrounded by weeping women and children, he found the body of old Birtchanine. Approaching and bending over it, he kissed the right hand with filial reverence, saying, "You, also, have died like a true Birtchanine."

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Chapper VI

TYPHUS

Now we see Serbia pulsating with the pride of victory; deservedly so, for had she not suffered the insolent triumph of the invaders in November, and did she not now see them, ragged and freezing, and defeated, fleeing like leaves before the wind? So swiftly came this change in the fortunes of war, that at first the outside world was incredulous of so colossal a defeat. A sigh of relief went up from all the people; faces brightened with smiles of satisfaction, and in the churches, now everywhere thrown open, prayers of thankfulness were offered up.

After this wave of uplifting emotion the country was relaxing into a delightful lethargy, the result of relief from extreme tension, when it was rudely awakened to the cruel fact that the Austrians had left in their wake the seeds of the devastating typhus.

In the remoter parts of the line of retreat

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their abandoned sick and wounded were only found a week to ten days later, and in a starving and desperate condition. Typhus had broken out among them, and the Serbians, not fully alive to the danger, and without sufficient hospital buildings or equipment, nursed them side by side with their own men.

Soon the dreaded disease spread in the hospitals, and from there to the civilians. This brave little country was now facing a new and unexpected foe, against which it had no weapon of defence. The struggle was pitiable to witness ; one saw doctors, nurses, and sometimes entire families swept away by a hand which human effort was powerless to stay.

The Allied countries and America came as quickly as possible to the aid of the suffering country, sending doctors, nurses, and hospital necessities. Adequate buildings were difficult to find, but soon all the different foreign missions were in working order, and Serbia was truly grateful for the help and comfort they brought to her people.

The typhus germ, however, seemed to have the gift of invisibility, for the sly little fellow evaded all the specialists and their wonderfully scientific research. Even a few of these doctors

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and nurses, unfortunately, succumbed to his machinations.

This enemy remained long with us, and we paid him a toll of more than 70,000 victims. Over nearly every door and gateway was floating the black flag, signal of death. The bright-coloured kerchiefs disappeared from the heads of the peasant women, giving way to universal black.

Tragic were the scenes witnessed during those cruel weeks. Even in our little village it was not unusual to see a procession of ten ox-carts at a time, following in close line, each with a plain pine coffin, wending its way slowly to the cemetery. The priests in their sacerdotal robes, heading the procession, were accompanied by boys carrying simple wooden crosses to mark the graves.

The pretty little cemetery with its daily increasing number of graves, some marked only by a plain wooden cross, some by crosses of stone, and others again by tattered banners, had become almost the centre of the village life. One heard constantly the wail of "Kuku mene!" ("Woe is me!"), a characteristic Serbian expression of grief.

There is a pretty legend which connects the

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" Kuku " with the death of Tzar Lazar. After the battle of Kossovo, 1389, when Lazar was captured and beheaded by the Turks, the souls of his daughters were permitted by the pitying gods to enter the bodies of cuckoos, whose melancholy note has ever since embodied the soul of grief.

In Serbia Saturday is the day of the week usually set apart for visiting the cemeteries. From dawn to dark the roads are filled with women and girls carrying food and wine, which they set out, interspersed with lighted candles, on the family graves. Sitting about in groups, they work themselves up into hysterical wailing, which continues all day and fills the air for great distances, with the traditional lamentation.

This graveyard ceremony, so satisfying to their hereditary instinct, is ghastly in its effect on a foreigner. One good side it has, however, for the food, now recognised as useless to the dead, is distributed at close of day to the poor ; in our little village the Tziganes mostly profited by it.

Night has fallen on the ghoulish graveyard scene ; the little river murmurs dreamily on, and in the dim gathering mist come floating

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over the vast meadowlands the beautiful veele (fairies), who love to sing and dance in their fairy rings when all the world is sleeping.

Woe to him who dares to disturb these mythical dancers! for although they are as a rule kindly disposed towards mortals, yet they can, when offended, be bitterly hostile.

These strange creations of the imagination are credited by the Serbians with infinite power, and from mountain peaks beyond the clouds, or from the depths of the forests, are heard their prophecies and warnings.

Prince Marko, the favourite hero of Serbian poetry and legend, was endowed by a veela with superhuman strength, and the famous veela Raviyoyla became his possesstrima (spiritual sister, or sister-in-God), coming from the clouds "to help him at his need," like the three fair queens who befriended King Arthur.

In certain parts of Serbia there is a pretty custom of renewing the turf which covers the graves; this is done every year on the morning of the second Monday after Easter, and in the afternoon of the same day the young people of these districts assemble to choose, according to the ancient and beautiful Serbian custom their spiritual brother or sister (probatim and

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possesstrim). On this occasion they weave green garlands, and having made their choice in the name of God and St. John, they kiss their chosen brother or sister through the wreaths, which they then exchange as token of mutual fidelity and aid during their whole lifetime.

This almost religious custom has kept alive in the hearts of all Serbians a very strong feeling of racial brotherhood, which has been and is still shown by the unrest of those Serbians who are separated from their mother country; one of the foremost problems in the general settlement after this war will be the uniting of hitherto divided races, without which no peace can be permanent.

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Chapter VII

VRNTSE

The lovely pale plum blossom, emblem of purity and fidelity, was in full bloom when from those dark clouds of suffering and tragedy the sunshine of welcome spring smiled upon us.

Then it was that we, like the birds, migrated in a northerly direction; passing to the station under the long arbour of chestnut trees, now blooming and in their fullest glory, the tears were close behind my eyes; for it was in that small village, with its primitive loveliness, that I had learned the best philosophies of life, from witnessing the courage and faith of those simple, patient peasants.

Our choice of a working centre again fell on a watering place, Vrnjatchka-Banja, or Vrntse, as it is more often called, not to confound it with Vranjska-Banja.

Here hospitals had been opened, and two important English missions had settled. So

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we, with our large quantity of hospital supplies, so kindly sent to us by friends, felt it was the place where we could render the best service, especially as we had two automobiles, one of which was a perfectly equipped ambulance.

Vrntse, in the middle of Serbia and about eighty miles north-west of Nish, is an important summer and health resort, the warm springs being as efficacious, it is said, as those of Carlsbad. Like all these villages, it lies far from the railway station; there is a principal street with shops, hotels, and restaurants on one side, the latter, at that time, converted into hospitals.

The other side of the street opens into the park, which occupies the entire centre of the village. This park is extensive and very pretty; there are good paths, winding among flower-beds and grass plots, and under the wide-spreading branches of beautiful trees; there are paths also along the banks of the picturesque little stream which runs through the park and is crossed by numerous wooden bridges. Near the drinking fountain is a large covered pavilion, which in time of peace serves as a *café*, flanked by the usual bandstand.

Before the great retreat, when the different

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Red Cross missions were driven down from the north and were pouring in on us, and when the wounded were arriving in startling numbers, this pavilion was used as a hospital, or rather, as a temporary resting-place for the wounded, since every hospital and house was full to overflowing.

Studded about the wooded hills, on either side of the village, are the attractive white villas with their bright green shutters.

Vrntse was in all its gayest attire of colour and blossom when we arrived; even England cannot boast of more luxury of green and of field flowers than this province of Kraljevo.

The fields were one mass of white daisies; fences and hedges were covered with flowering vines, which also found their way up the trunks of trees, producing that wild confusion of green and colour so artistic in its blending.

Every roadside was luxuriant with masses of flowers up to the very edge of the cart tracks, only just escaping the wheels.

Vrntse was the favoured spot of the best families from Belgrade, and as these ladies were anxious to help the sick and suffering, I prepared a store and sewing-room in a large summer parlour which stood in our garden.

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Enough sewing-machines for our needs were found among the villagers, and soon about thirty ladies were at work daily making hospital necessities, and also shirts and pyjamas for the soldiers. There we worked diligently all the morning, and again in the afternoon ; about five o'clock, friends, members of the English mission, officers on leave and convalescent, dropped in, bringing the latest news ; tea was served, and this made a bright and happy interval in the day. We worked mostly for the poorer Serbian hospitals, as those of the English were richer in all supplies.

Since the violent fighting of December and the epidemic of typhus which followed, there had been a lull and quiet in Serbia. The wounded were recovering and returning, either to their regiments or their homes—in the latter case unfit for more fighting ; the hospitals were emptying and doctors and nurses found time hanging heavy on their hands. We all took advantage of this slack time to make excursions to the places of interest in the surroundings and to organise picnics up in the woods of the Gotch Mountains. A general air of lightheartedness prevailed, which, though we did not realise it at the time, was the brief ray

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of sunshine soon to be obscured by the looming storm.

Our excursion to the Monastery of Ljubostinja remains as a bright recollection of this holiday interval. It began with an enjoyable automobile run to Trstenik, a beautiful little village lying half-way between Vrntse and Kruschevatz; from there we crossed the bridge over the Morava, and continued along a narrow road, between the river bordered by graceful weeping willows, and the low verdant hills. The road, made in a time when automobiles were undreamt of, became so narrow that we were compelled to continue our way on foot.

It was then that my envious admiration was evoked by the footwear of the Serbians, owing to the fact that every peasant on the road walked as if he, like the famous giant, were the possessor of seven-leagued boots. Observation revealed, however, that his speed was not due to magic, but to the national opanka, made of tanned leather, shaped to the foot, and laced with strips of leather which fastened above the ankle. The absence of stiff soles and heels makes it necessary for the wearer to place his foot flat, without ever really raising it. This gives a long sliding step,

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with which he covers the ground at almost lightning speed. The dark woollen stockings worn with these opanke reached barely to the knee, where they were artistically finished off with a band of gay-coloured flowers, executed in tapestry stitch.

We, less fleet of foot than our friends the peasants, because encumbered by the modish Western shoe, began to think that the monastery was pertinaciously running away from us. To our plaintive inquiry about the distance, a passing peasant replied, "It is only a gunshot away." We went on comforted, but his idea of the length of a gunshot was far different from ours, for we walked fully an hour more before reaching our goal.

It is a long lane which has no turning, so at last this one led us directly into Ljubostinja, a lovely sheltered spot adapted by Nature for just such a little haven of peace. The buildings have no particular importance, except the chapel, which is a little gem, with its Byzantine interior; on its walls still remain a few of the original frescoes and mosaics. Very proud the old priests are of the monastery treasures, costly gifts from foreign Tzars and rich families of the country. It was in this arcadian spot

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MONASTRY OF LJUBOSTINJA.

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that Militza, widow of Lazar, last of the Serbian Tzars, secluded herself, after his death on the fatal field of Kossovo, and her tomb is still to be seen here.

When the shops at Vrntse fell short of our requirements we had the more pretentious ones at Kruschevatz to draw upon. This meant an afternoon excursion, to which we looked forward with keen delight. It was more than an hour's run in automobile, speed being impossible on those roads, because horses, oxen, and even the people were terrorised by the machine. Nothing in their quiet lives ever called for quick or sudden resolution, so it was amusing to see their effort to decide what would be their safest course of action before such a devilish monster. Some peasants fled when hearing the horn, leaving their oxen and carts in the hands of fate; in that case the bewildered beasts usually threw themselves, and their load with them, into the ditch; other braver spirits ran to the heads of their animals, who then invariably bolted to our side of the road, causing tenfold greater confusion and danger. The general instinct of man and beast was to flee from us, either into the ditches or across the

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adjacent fields, if fences or hedges were not in their way.

The entire route is one continuously beautiful panorama of mountains, flowering fields, and pretty little villages in which the whitewashed peasant houses, some festooned with strings of tobacco leaves, brown and yellow, others flaunting in their garlands of vivid scarlet pepper-pods, blend in a colour scheme uniquely characteristic of this country. The gentle green-flowing Morava, seen by glimpses here and there, heightens the charm of this idyllic landscape.

Our arrival at Kruschevatz always attracted a gaping crowd of children and idlers, from whose gaze we swiftly fled, leaving the chauffeur and gendarme to parley with and disperse them.

In the time of Tzar Lazar, Kruschevatz was the capital of Serbia, and before this war there was a large party in favour of making it again the capital. An interesting relic of its bygone importance is the fourteenth century church of Tzar Lazar on the outskirts of the town.

Kraljevo was another neighbouring town on which we relied for stores. It was quite as interesting an automobile run as that to

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Kruschevatz, but in an opposite direction. The road, wilder in its beauty, passed through a dense oak forest. The approach to the town is over an important bridge spanning the Morava, after which the road continues in a sudden ascent. A short distance out is the Monastery of Zitcha, where is the ancient coronation chapel. An interesting fact is that every King passes through a different door, for after each coronation the door through which the King has passed is permanently walled up. There still remain damaged frescoes, recalling the glories of Stephan Nemanja of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and Dushan of the fourteenth century.

What a blessing that God keeps the future always a mystery, for in those occasional visits to Kraljevo we little imagined that it was so soon to be the target for the monster German guns, and that we, with thousands of other souls, would be passing hurriedly through it to reach our only road of escape, the valley of the Ibar, which for many a poor creature was to be the valley of death!

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CHAPTER VIII

THIRD INVASION

THUS the summer wore on, much work and little play forming the routine of our day.

Austria was now making overtures for a separate peace with Serbia, holding out as a bait the restoration of a part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, so brutally annexed in 1908. In return she demanded free passage through Serbia for Austrian and German troops, so that a helping hand could be given to the Turks. To these proposals Serbia turned a deaf ear, thereby proving her loyalty to her Allies, and as she staked her all and lost, it behoves her Allies to restore to her a greater Serbia than her enemies proposed.

The first days of August brought from the Allies a proposal that cessions of territory in Macedonia should be made to Bulgaria to win her adherence to their cause; territory lost in 1389 and only won back heroically from the Turks in 1912, and including the important

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town of Monastir. This caused consternation among the Serbs, and a great burst of resentment, for they well knew, what their Allies could not then see, that Bulgaria had already made her choice. However, the Serbians soon restrained their patriotic emotions, and would have relinquished the territory which so filled their hearts with pride if the sacrifice could have helped the general cause.

The conditions offered did not, however, satisfy the Bulgarians, probably because they were already, with the help of Germany and Austria, subtly weaving the web which, extending from Berlin to Constantinople, entangled Serbia so hopelessly in its meshes.

In September a great movement of troops was known to be going on north of the Danube ; thus no surprise was felt when, on the 6th of October, another bombardment of Belgrade commenced. It is said that in the course of forty-eight hours more than 50,000 shells were showered into the town, and aeroplanes, flying low, were dropping bombs, and at the same time indicating the three roads by which the population was fleeing, so that the guns could mow down these hopelessly entrapped victims. There was practically nothing to reply to this

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tremendous fire, the small defending force was overpowered, and on the 8th Belgrade was in the enemy's hands.

The Serbians at this time were outnumbered three to one, but the fate of the country was really sealed by the crushing superiority of German guns.

In spite of allied assurances to the contrary Bulgaria commenced her invasion three days later. Outnumbered now five to one, Serbia was facing a black and impossible situation; attacked on the north by the Germans, on the north-west by the Austrians, and now on the east by the Bulgarians, and deserted by Greece, with whom she had an alliance forged of many strong links of mutual interests and sufferings.

The one ray of hope and light lay in the fact that her Allies were landing troops at Salonika; a date was announced for the arrival of French troops at Nish, and such joy did this create, that 20,000 dinars, which Serbia could ill afford, were spent on the official decoration of the town. Flags and bunting were everywhere, and the crowds thronging the gaily bedecked station were worked up to a pitch of excitement, which, at the non-arrival of the expected

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troops, made the consequent reaction more bitter by contrast.

It is a pathetic fact that when the Bulgarians made their entry into Nish on the 5th of November, the Allied flags hoisted with such ardent enthusiasm to welcome the French soldiers, forerunners of the promised help of the Allies, were still flying over many houses.

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Chapter IX

RETREAT: VRNTSE TO RASHKA

We were all feverishly working during those days, for the wounded were arriving in unprecedented numbers, and not only were we trying to supply the increasing needs of the hospitals, but we were also giving out packages, each containing a flannel shirt, woollen belts, mittens, muffler and stockings, to the soldiers passing through, and to the new recruits, for it had been found necessary to mobilise even the boys of fifteen years.

Poor lads! As I watched them, so eager and happy to have those few warm things for their comfort, my heart ached with the thought of the misery facing them, and for the loving anxious mothers left longing and praying for their return.

Having been obliged to evacuate Nish on the 21st, the Government and Legations had come to Kraljevo and the General Staff was now at Kruschevatz. The question was no

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longer how to save Serbia, but how to save the army and as much of the stores and material as could be got away. Consequently, at Kraljevo the First Army was now holding the enemy off, while other troops and stores were passing out by the valley of the Ibar.

Meantime, we were living and working to the heartbreaking music of the German heavy artillery. Soldiers were passing in such numbers that the sewing-machines were abandoned, and our full working staff, with all the help we could find, even including little children, were doing up and giving out the much-desired packages.

Many stores, such as medicines, Bovril, and English cereal foods, were being distributed to the civilians, and condensed milk, especially to the mothers of young children.

Vrntse was packed, so packed that one could almost have hung out the sign "Standing-room only." The people were serious, but calm before the inevitable, with the calm and resignation born of the accumulated sufferings and renunciations of many centuries.

We had waited, hoping against hope, till the very last moment; then, on the morning of November 2nd officers came to tell my husband

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that the enemy could no longer be held back from Kraljevo; that the Government and Diplomatic Corps had left for Rashka, and that arrangements had been made for us to follow that same evening.

Bitterly sad for me was the parting from the companions of those past months; working and feeling together in the same cause, as we had done, had created between us a bond of sympathy which nothing can ever break.

At ten o'clock that evening we left Vrntse in our motors, the motor ambulance following with the five foreign servants we had taken to Serbia, a few handbags as luggage, and food for several days. Progress was slow, the road being thronged with fugitives.

As we were now moving towards the seat of war, the sound of the cannon became one continuous rumble, so rapidly was the enemy artillery working.

Even now it was not certain that we could pass through Kraljevo and reach the only road to safety; that failing, the alternative would be to return to Vrntse, abandon the motors, and walk over the high Gotch Mountains to Rashka.

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The good veele were surely guiding us to safety, for we were able to reach Kraljevo at midnight without misadventure, and, in passing through the town, I had the opportunity of seeing and admiring the great courage and activity of the Serbian soldiers, whom I had already grown to love for their heroism and patience in the hospitals. They were hurriedly loading all available ox-carts with ammunition, the last to be got away, and the serious and purposeful expression on their faces made on me a lasting impression.

Once outside the town we were on the main road of retreat, but making our way very slowly, because of the ever-increasing exodus.

At daybreak a marvellous scene lay before us, for as far as eye could see in this narrow gorge of the Ibar was an unending file of ox-carts loaded with ammunition and stores; field kitchens drawn by oxen; English, French, and Russian doctors and nurses in automobiles; Austrian prisoners; battalions of the last Serbian recruits, boys from fifteen to seventeen years, armed with one rifle among five and supplied with bread for only one day in three; herds of cattle and droves of sheep, all moving at a snail's pace through the

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slippery mud. There, before us, lay the tragedy of an entire nation in flight.

All day we were passing this slow, funeral-like procession, for at the sound of the military whistle from our officer in attendance, a signal so well known to those tired transport drivers walking in the mud, one and all moved mechanically aside to let us pass.

At some points the road was high above the river; again, almost on the level. Some poor horses, unable to keep their footing in the treacherous mud, slipped over the banks, taking with them their frail wagons, in a shower of pots and kettles, and other belongings of the unhappy fugitives; soon all were swept along on the tide of the surging Ibar; nor did the people themselves always escape injuries, sometimes falling over the banks or under the horses' feet, for there was no more possibility of stopping that ceaseless stream of people and animals than there was of arresting the course of the dark river below.

Hovering above us, watching cynically the fruits of their barbarism, were the aeroplanes of the enemy: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Silence is the expression of tragedy, and in

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the uncanny silence of this sinister road the groaning of the ox-carts struck torturing false notes on our heart-strings, which were by now strung up almost to breaking pitch.

Rich in beautiful wild scenery is this valley of the Ibar, and of no small interest are the ruins of Maglitch, the "Castle of the Mists," dating from the time of Stephan Nemanja, who reigned in the middle ages.

Looking down upon us from their commanding height these ruins of a bygone greatness seemed instinct with the voice of Saint Sava,[1] crying out, alas, in vain! against the unholy breaking of God's laws by an unjust and pitiless invader.

The late afternoon of the 3rd brought us to Rashka. This little village, which was the birthplace of Serbia as a nation, and once, in the twelfth century, its capital, was destined again to play that same *rôle* for one short week.

After chequered fortunes, having been several centuries in the hands of the Turks, it was only won back by Serbia in the war of 1912.

[1] Saint Sava, third son of Stephan Nemanja, prior of the convent of Chilender on Mount Athos, and founder of the Serbian National Church.

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CHAPTER X

RASHKA TO MITROVITZA

ONLY one short night did we tarry in this little village, which clings to the stark steep rocks overhanging the Ibar, and in the early morning of the 4th we took the road again. Though Serbia was in flight towards the south the idea had not taken root that the end would be exile. In fact, even at this stage, just before we left Rashka, several officers confided to me the plan which was developing whereby the full strength of the Serbian armies was to be hurled against the Bulgarians, over the Katchanik Mountains, to retake Uskub, and to join forces with the English and French, now pushing up towards Veles.

Inspired with hope by this comforting idea we started off for Mitrovitza, which should have been reached in the course of a few hours, if such details as bridges had not been overlooked here and there in the recent construction of this otherwise good road, and if rain

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had not swollen insignificant little streams into formidable rivers. One of these latter confronted us after about an hour's run from Rashka. Two motor lorries had attempted to cross, and had now sunk deep in the middle of the stream. A military convoy with twelve oxen soon arrived on the scene, and the work of releasing the lorries commenced. The soldiers went into the icy water to fasten the necessary ropes and chains, then the six yoke of oxen, after the usual difficulties and accidents, pulling from the other shore brought the lorries through the water and up a short steep hill to the road.

Then came our turn; the chauffeur had removed from the motor all engine parts which should not come in contact with water, chains were attached, and we were rushed through the swift turbulent stream in a perfect bedlam of noise and movement, the car lurching from side to side, like a ship in a heavy sea, as it passed over huge stones. The splashing of the water, the shrieks of the soldiers to keep their oxen in movement, and our desperate struggles to avoid being pitched out, gave us a few exciting and thrilling moments. The ambulance followed in like manner, and after putting

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the machinery in order again we went on, leaving the poor oxen leaders standing in line with the water dripping from their ragged clothes ; this incident, to us of so much moment, was to them all in the day's work.

This had taken up hours of a glorious autumn day, and as we glided through this wildly beautiful scenery it was difficult to realise all the misery we had left behind at Rashka and along the road.

As evening fell we came to another boisterous stream, shallow, but rushing over the rocks in a current too strong for the motors to pass through ; with no help in sight there was nothing to do but pass the night in the automobiles.

At daybreak a long chain of Austrian prisoners pulled us across, and we followed a road hewn out of the mountain side and overhanging the Ibar precipitously ; it was narrow, and in places had been destroyed by the recent storms. Austrian prisoners were at work mending it as best they could without the proper tools or materials.

Under these conditions we crawled along between the mountain wall and the precipice, holding our breath as we heard the loose

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stones dropping into the depths below. Silent as death, we were dumb with the sense of our terrible danger.

Later, when the First Army and all the mass of fugitives passed over this road, lorries and other vehicles fell down the steep bank, carrying many unfortunate creatures to their death.

A sudden turn in the road revealed Mitrovitza rising high out of a sheet of water, formed by the Ibar and its tributary, the Sitnitza, which almost surround the town. Imposingly massed on the hill-top were immense yellow barracks, municipal buildings, which were formerly the konak, and near by the usual minaret.

Near as we seemed to our goal, it was another hour before the winding road led us through the old Turkish gateway into the town. Here had been reserved a house which sheltered us for eleven days. Food was scarce and we were obliged to make one dish suffice for each meal.

Mitrovitza, which had been under Turkish rule for centuries, until taken by the Serbs in 1912, was naturally more Turkish than Serbian; but now, thronged with officers and soldiers in varied uniforms, with refugees

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and representatives of different countries, all mingling with the resident Turks and Albanians, it had quite a cosmopolitan atmosphere.

The shops in the bazaar seemed to be doing a thriving business, and their crafty Turk proprietors, exploiting the situation, reaped a golden harvest from this restless, homeless crowd.

We often walked out to a large open plain where troops were encamped, whence we saw, high up on a rocky eminence, the ruins of the fortress of Swetchan, where Ourosch Detschanski, the father of Emperor Douchan, so mysteriously died.

It was interesting also to watch the six aeroplanes landing here, daily, on their return from Rashka and Novi-Bazar, bringing news of the advance of the German-Austrian army. Enough cannot be said of the courage of these young French aviators, who continued their flights with aeroplanes which had not been under cover for months, and the planes of which were warped by exposure to all the elements.

At tea time, ministers, diplomats, representatives of French and American newspapers

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and fugitive friends dropped in to see us; the one absorbing topic of conversation was the success of the Serbians in the tremendous fight they were now putting up at Katchanik. It was their one last desperate chance, and, if they could succeed in driving the Bulgarians back, would have opened up the Tetovo road to Monastir, where we would all have sought refuge. But the Germans were advancing on us faster than we had supposed, and early in the morning of the 17th, with less than an hour for preparation, we were in our automobiles, again to follow a nomad life.

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Chapter XI

MITROVITZA TO PRIZREND

Kossovo.

Leaving Mitrovitza, a dim outline in the distance, we began to realise in what a fool's paradise we had been living during the past two weeks, hoping for the opening of the Tetovo road to Monastir.

We were now passing through the historical plain of Kossovo, the theatre of war where had been enacted so many of the tragedies of Serbian national life—Kossovo, the sad memory of which remains sacred and fresh in the hearts of all Serbian-speaking people, in Bosnia as in Montenegro, in Serbia as in Croatia, in the Banat as in Macedonia; Kossovo, where in the war of 1912 the soldiers went down on their knees and kissed the ground, and where in their beautiful and vivid imagination they actually saw and were led to victory by their great legendary hero, Marko-Kraljevitch.

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As we hurried on, passing the great crowd of fugitives, piteously herded like fleeing sheep before the fangs of the wolf, and seeking a last corner of safety, my mind turned back, and in a marvellous dream and vision rose before me ghosts out of the past; the great Tzar Lazar in battle array, at the head of his gorgeously equipped soldiers, plumes floated from glistening helmets, shining armour, blades and lances dazzled the eye; beautiful Arabian horses in brilliant and costly trappings restlessly pawed the air; then, as they rushed against their too numerous enemies, Lazar, who had been offered by an angel his choice of an earthly or a heavenly crown, and had chosen the latter, fell beheaded on the tragic field, where Serbia buried at once her beloved Tzar and her independence.

Skulking sinister in the background I see the Judas of the camp, Vouk Brankovitch, with his 10,000 deserters, and on the ground where they stand, says the legend, nothing has since grown. Vouk, the traitor! prototype of renegade treachery, which, under different disguises, is still undermining our faith in man and striving to turn our beautiful world into the hell which is its own proper element.

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Then, more knightly by contrast, comes the beloved Milosh Oblitch, who, to prove his devotion to his country and to his Tzar, stabbed the Sultan Murad I. in his silken tent.

The vision of the plain swims red before my eyes: red from the blood that ran so freely on that 28th day of June, 1389; blood from which springs up every year a little red flower, growing in no other place the world.

In the soul of every Serbian lives the sad memory of that fatal day, whose anniversary, called Vidov-dan, is celebrated with religious and patriotic observances by every Serbian, in whatever land he be.

And then in my mind a new thought leaps to life, another tragedy forces itself on my vision, when 525 years later, an Austrian Archduke, heir to the throne, chose to review his troops in a province groaning under Austrian oppression and celebrating its sad Vidov-dan.

I woo the voices to know why that date was chosen, but without reply; mystery is not yet ready to lift the veil.

Night had fallen when, awakening from my sad reverie, I found we were passing over a little bridge into Prizrend. A Serbian Turk

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opened his house to us, and a most delightful host he was during our short stay.

Snow fell heavily the next day, causing much suffering to the thousands of fugitives on the road and in the town.

The fatal hour was fast approaching, for the army had played its last card, and after having thrown the Bulgarians back from one mountain top to another, was not far from its goal; then Bulgarian reinforcements arrived, and the Serbians, fighting in desperation with the thought of their loved ones left to the mercy of these inhuman invaders, attacking at the point of the bayonet, and dying by thousands the death of heroes, were at last compelled to join the army of fugitives; exhausted and broken down by spiritual and physical suffering, they followed their Calvary, and another tragedy was added to Kossovo.

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Chapter XII

THE BATTLE OF KOSSOVO[1]

I

The Sultan Murad o'er Kossovo comes
With banners and drums.

There, all in characters fair,
He wrote a letter; and there
Bade his estaffettes despatch
To bear it to Krouchevatch,
To the white-wall'd town of the Tzar,
To the hands of Prince Lazar.
"Listen, Lazarus, chief of the Serbs, to me!
That which never hath been, that which never
shall be,
Is that two lords one land should sway,
And the same rayas two tributes pay.
Send to me, therefore, the tributes and keys;
The golden keys of each white town;

[1] The following poem is reprinted from a book of "National Songs of Serbia," by Owen Meredith. London. 1861.

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And send me a seven years' tribute with these.
But if this thou wilt not do,
Then come thou down over Kossovo :
On the field of Kossovo come thou down,
That we may divide the land with our swords.
These are my words."

When Lazarus this letter had read,
Bitter, bitter were the tears he shed.

2

A grey bird, a falcon, comes flying apace
From Jerusalem, from the Holy Place ;
And he bears a light swallow abroad.
It is not a grey bird, a falcon, God wot !
But the Saint Elias ; and it is not
A light swallow he bears from afar,
But a letter from the Mother of God
To the Tzar who in Kossovo stays.
And the letter is dropt on the knees of the Tzar ;
And these are the words that it says :—

" Lazarus, Prince of a race that I love,
Which empire choosest thou ?
That of the heaven above ?
Or that of the earth below ?
If thou choose thee an earthly realm,
Saddle horse, belt spur, and away !
Warriors, bind ye both sabre and helm,

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And rush on the Turks, and they
With their army whole shall perish.
But, if rather a heavenly crown thou cherish,
At Kossovo build ye a temple fair:
There no foundations of marble lay,
But only silk of the scarlet dye.
Range ye the army in battle array,
And let each and all full solemnly
Partake of the blessèd sacrament there.
For then of a certainty know,
Ye shall utterly perish, both thou
And thine army all; and the Turk shall be
Lord of the land that is under thee."

When the Tzar he read these words,
His thoughts were as long and as sharp as swords.
"God of my fathers, what shall I choose?
If a heavenly empire, then must I lose
All that is dearest to me upon earth;
But if that the heavenly here I refuse,
What then is the earthly worth?
It is but a day,
It passeth away,
And the glory of earth full soon is o'er,
And the glory of God is more and more."

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" What is this world's renown ? "
(His heart was heavy, his soul was stirr'd.)
" Shall an earthly empire be preferr'd
To an everlasting crown ?
At Kossovo build me a temple fair :
Lay no foundations of marble down,
But only silk of the scarlet dye."
Then he sent for the Serbian Patriarch :
With him twelve bishops to Kossovo went.
It was at the lifting of the dark :
They ranged the army in battle array,
And the army all full solemnly
Received the blessèd sacrament,
And hardly was this done, when lo !
The Turks came rushing on Kossovo.

3

" Ivan Kossantchitch, my pobratime,
What of the Turk ? How deem ye of him ?
Is he strong, is he many, is he near ?
Our battle, say ! may we show him ?
May we hope to overthrow him ?
What news of him bringest thou here ? "

And Ivan Kossantchitch replied :
" Milosch Obilitch, my brother, dear,
I have lookt on the Turk in his pride.
He is strong, he is many, he is near,

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His tents are on every side.
Were we all of us hewn into morsels, and salted,
Hardly, I think, should we salt him his meat.
Two whole days have I journeyed, nor halted,
Toward the Turk, near the Turk, round him, and never
Could I number his numbers, or measure his end.
From Erâble to Sazlia, brother, my feet
Have wander'd; from Sazlia round by the river,
Where the river comes round to the bridge with a bend;
And over the bridge to the town of Zvétchan;
From Zvétchan to Tchéchan, and further, and ever
Further, and over the mountains, wherever
Foot may fall, or eye may scan,
I saw nought but Mussulman.

"Eastward and westward, and southward and nor'ward,
Scaling the hillsides, and scathing the gorse,
Horseman to horseman, and horse against horse;
Lances like forests when forests are black;

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Standards like clouds flying backward and forward,
White tents like snowdrifts piled up at the back.
The rain may, in torrents, fall down out of heaven,
But never the earth will it reach :
Nothing but horsemen, nothing but horses,
Thick as the sands which the wild river courses
Leave, after tempest, in heaps on the beach.
Murad, for pasture, hath given
To his horsemen the plain of Mazguite.
Lances a-ripple all over the land,
Tost like the bearded and billowy wheat
By the winds of the mountain driven
Under the mountain slab.
Murad looks down in command
Over Sitnitza and Lab."

" Answer me, Ivan, answer ye me,
Where may the tent of Murad be ?
His milk-white tent, may one see it afar
O'er the plain, from the mountain, or out of the wood ?
For I have sworn to the Prince Lazar
A solemn vow upon Holy Rood,
To bring him the head of the Turkish Tzar,
And set my feet in his infidel blood."

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" Art mad, my pobratime, art mad ?
Where may the tent be, the tent of Murad ?
In the midst of a million eyes and ears :
In the midst of a million swords and spears,
In the heart of the camp of the Turk.
Fatal thy vow is, and wild is the work ;
For hadst thou the wings of the falcon, to fly
Fleeter than lightning, along the deep sky,
The wings of the falcon, though fleet be they,
Would never bear thee thy body away."

And Milosch abjured him : " O Ivan, my brother,
(Tho' not by the blood, yet more dear than all other,)
See thou say nothing of this to our lord,
Lest ye sorrow his heart ; and say never a word,
Lest our friends be afflicted, and fail. But thou
Shalt rather answer to who would know,
And boldly aver to the Tzar :
' The Turk is many, but more are we,
And easy and light is the victory :
For he is not an army of men of war,
But a rabble rather
Of rascals that gather

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To the promise of plunder from places afar;
Priests and pedlars,
Jugglers and fiddlers,
Dancers and drummers,
Varlets and mummers,
Boys and buffoons—all craven loons
That never in burly of battle have bled,
Never have combated sword in hand;
They are only come, the beggars, for bread,
And to feed on the fat of the land.
And the dreadful, dismal dysentery
Is among their men, and their horses die
Of a daily increasing malady.' "

4

Lazarus, lord of the Serbs, our Tzar,
At Krouchevatch high Slava doth hold.
Around him, sitting by cups of gold,
His sons and his seigneurs are.

To right, the reverend Youg Bogdan;
Round whom the nine young Yougovitch;
To left, that thrice-accursèd man,
The traitor black, Vouk Brankovitch;
And many a lord, along the board,
And last of all, in the knightly train,

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Milosch, the manly Voivod ;
Next him, Serbian Voivodes twain,
Ivan Kossantchitch, his brother in God,
And Milan Toplitza, a man without stain.

And the Tzar bade pour the purple wine,
And, brimming up his golden cup,
Lookt all adown that lordly line.

" To whom shall the King first pledge ? " he began.
" If first to age, this health should be,
To no man do I drink but thee,
Revered old Youg Bogdan ;
But if to rank or high degree,
Vouk Brankovitch, I drink to thee.
If to friendship be the toast,
My brothers nine, I know not which
Amongst you all I love the most,
You gallant-hearted Yougovitch !
If to beauty, then be thine,
Ivan, first the flowing wine.
If to length and strength of limb,
Then the wine to Milan brim—
No man measures height with him.
If to valour, more than even
Stature, beauty, friendship, age,
Our first honours should be given,

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Then to Milosch must we pledge.
Yet, be that as it may be,
Milosch, I drink to none but thee!
Milosch, thy health!
Drink, man, drink!
Why should any man care to think?
Traitor or true, or friend or foe,
To thee I drain this goblet low;
And, ere to-morrow, at Kossovo,
Thou thy master hast betray'd
To the Turk, for wages paid,
(Friend or foe, whate'er befall,
True or traitor, what care I?)
The King drinks to thee in his hall,
Lip to lip, and eye to eye,
Pledge me now in sight of all;
And, since to thee I fill it up,
Take thou too this golden cup,
And add it to ill-gotten wealth—
Milosch, thy health!"
Lightly Milosch bounded up,
Lightly caught the golden cup,
To the black earth bow'd his head,
And "Noble master, thanks!" he said,
"For the pledge thou pledgest me,
And thanks that, of thy courtesy,
Thou to me dost first allot,

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A true, true health, O King, to thee,
To pledge back in this golden token ;
Thanks for this, my lord, but not
For the words which thou hast spoken.
For, oh ! (and may my loyalty,
Dear liege, not fatal prove to me,
Before the truth is judged between
Us, and this fair company !)
My true heart is sound and clean,
Traitor never have I been,
Traitor never will I be !
But at Kossovo to-morrow morn
I trust, as I am a living man,
A soldier and a Christian,
To go to the death for the true, true faith,
True to the last where my faith is sworn,
Careless of calumny, scorning scorn !
The traitor is sitting by thy side,
He toucheth thy robe, thy wine he drinketh,
To God and his king he hath foully lied,
Vouk Brankovitch, the servile-eyed,
Christian false, and perjured friend !
God judge between us twain i' the end,
And perish he in the thought he thinketh !
To-morrow a noble day will be,
For at Kossovo all men shall see

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What is the truth betwixt us two,
And who is traitor, and who is true.
For I swear by the great sun in the sky,
And I swear by the living God on high,
That judgeth us all, whate'er befall,
When at Kossovo upon battle plain,
Murad, the Turk, I have sought and slain
(Sought and slain, for I swore by the rood
To set my feet in his Turkish blood),
If God but grant me safe and sane
A living man to come again
Back to white-wall'd Krouchevatch,
And there that traitor foul I catch,
Vouk Brankovitch, I will have by the throat.
All men shall see it, and all men shall note,
For it shall be done in the light of the sun.
To my good war-lance I will fix his skull,
As a woman fixes a ball of wool
To her distaff when her spinning is done.
Then I will bear him to Kossovo,
Bear him back to the battle plain ;
All men shall see it, and all men shall know
Who is the traitor of us twain."

5

At the royal board a noble pair
Sit together, and full sad they are.

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Lazarus and his Militza fair,
The sweet-eyed Tzarina and the Tzar.
Troubled is the Tzar's broad brow,
The Tzarina's eyes are dim,
And, with tears that dare not flow,
The Tzarina says to him :—

" Lord Lazarus, O golden crown
Of Serbia, and sweetheart my own !
To-morrow morn to Kossovo
With thee to the battle go
Servitors and Voivodes.
I alone, in these abodes,
Vacant of thy voice, remain ;
Hearing, haply, on the wind,
Murmurs of the battle plain ;
Heavy of heart, and sad of mind,
Silent in sorrows, alone with pain.
O think on this, my life, my lord,
Never a soul to carry a word
To Kossovo, from me to thee,
To Krouchevatch from thee to me ;
Wherefore, lord, of my brothers nine,
The sons of Youg, our father old
(Golden stars in a crown of gold !)
Let one, for once, be wholly mine.
Mine to witness the tears I weep ;
Mine to solace the vigil I keep ;

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Mine alone, of my nine brothers,
To pray with me for those eight others ;
Of brothers nine, but leave me one
To swear by when the rest be gone ! "

And Lazarus, lord of the Serbs, replied :
" Militza, sweetheart, wife true-eyed,
Of the nine brothers, tell to me which
Thou lovest best, that he should rest
In our white palace to watch by thee.
Which of them, sweetheart ?—tell to me ! "
And she answer'd, " Bocko Yougovitch."
And Lazarus, lord of the Serbs, replied :
" Militza, sweetheart, wife true-eyed,
To-morrow, when from her red bower
The watery dawn begins to break,
Ere yet the sun hath felt his power,
Seek thou the city walls, and take
Thy post against the Eastern gate :
There shalt thou see the army pass,
To mantle the field in martial state,
And trample the dew-drop out of the grass,
All lusty warriors, leal and true,
Who in battle have never turn'd their backs,
In complete steel, with curtle axe ;
Each spearman true, as his own true steel.
And, foremost of all, that, with iron heel,

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Crush the wet violet down in the moss,
With purple plumes, in vesture rich,
Thy brother, Bocko Yougovitch,
Bearing the standard of the Cross.
Seize thou the golden bridle-ring,
Greet him fair from his lord and king,
And bid him that he the standard yield
To whomsoever he deemeth best,
And turn about from the battlefield,
In our white palace with thee to rest."

6

Now, when the dawn from her red bower
Upclomb the chilly skies, and, all
Athwart the freshening city tower,
The silent light began to fall
About the breezy yellow flower
That shook on the shadowy city wall,
Militza, through the glimmering streets,
Goes forth against the Eastern gate.
There, all i' the morning light, she meets
The army on to the distant down,
Winding out of the dusky town,
To mantle the field in martial state,
And trample the dew-drop out of the grass.
O brothers, a goodly sight it was!

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With curtle axe, in complete steel,
So many a warrior, lusty and leal,
So many a spearman, stout and true,
Marching to battle in order due.
And foremost among that stately throng,
With, over his helmet's golden boss,
Floating plumes of the purple rich,
The gallant Bocko Yougovitch
Bearing the standard of the Cross.
All blazing gold his corselet beam'd,
Imperial purple fold on fold,
The mighty Christian ensign stream'd
Over his red-roan courser bold ;
And high upon the standard top
Against the merry morning gleam'd
An apple wrought of purest gold ;
Thereon the great gold cross, from which,
All glittering downward, drop by drop,
Great golden acorns, lightly hung,
Over his shining shoulder flung
Flashes of light o'er Yougovitch.

She caught the bridle ring : in check
The red-roan courser paw'd the ground.
About her brother's bended neck
Her milk-white arm she softly wound,

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And half in hope, and half in fear,
She whisper'd in the young man's ear :—
" Brother, my liege and thine, the king,
Commits me to thy comforting.
He greets thee fair, and bids me say
(The which with all my heart I pray)
That thou the royal ensign yield
To whomsoever thou deemest best,
And turn about from the battlefield
At Krouchevatch with me to rest,
That of nine brothers I may have one
To swear by when the rest be gone."

But " Foul befall," the young man said,
" The man that turns his horse's head,
Whoe'er he be, from battle plain :
Turn thee, sister, turn again
To thy white tower ! I will not yield
The Holy Cross 'tis mine to bear,
Nor turn about from the battlefield.
Not though the king should give, I swear,
The whole of Krouchevatch to me,
Would I turn thitherwards with thee.
To-day will be the noblest day
Yon sun in heaven did ever see ;
Nor shall my own true comrades say
This day, in sorrow or scorn, of me,

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' The craven heart that dared not go
To the great fight of Kossovo ;
That fear'd to find a saintly death,
Nor pour'd his blood for Holy Rood,
Nor fell for the Christian faith.' "
He prickt his horse toward the gate,
And, thro' a cloud of hoary mist
Glittering like one amethyst,
Swept forth into the morning wan.
Then up there rides in royal state,
With his seven sons, old Youg Bogdan.
She stopt them one by one ; she took
The bridle rein ; she spoke to them all.
Not one of them all would turn and look :
Not one of them all would listen and wait ;
But the trumpet sounded in the gate,
And they follow'd the trumpet call.

And after these, a little space,
Voin Yougovitch not far
She spied come riding at slow space,
Leading the destriers of the Tzar,
All trapt and housed with gold be they,
And going an amble by the way.
His good steed was of dapple grey.
She caught the bridle ring : in check

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The good grey courser paw'd the ground.
Her milk-white arm she softly wound
About her brother's bended neck ;
And half in hope, and half in fear,
She whisper'd in the young man's ear :
" Brother, my liege and thine, the king,
Commits me to thy comforting.
He greets thee fair, and bids me say
(The which with all my heart I pray)
That thou the royal destriers yield
To whomsoever thou deemest best,
And turn about from the battlefield
In Krouchevatch with me to rest,
That of nine brothers I may have one
To swear by when the rest be gone."

But " Sister, foul befall," he said,
" The man that turns his horse's head,
Whoe'er be he, from battle plain :
Turn thee, sister, turn again
To thy white tower ! I will not yield
The destriers of my lord the Tzar,
Nor turn about from the battlefield,
Where all my noble kinsmen are,
Albeit to meet my death I go
To the great fight of Kossovo ;
To pour my blood for Holy Rood,

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To fight to the death for the Christian Faith,
With my kinsmen all to fight and fall,
With our foreheads against the foe."

Through the gate he prickt his steed,
And off to the dreary downs afar,
Leading as fast as he might lead
The destriers of the Tzar.
But Dame Militza, when no more
She heard the echoing hoofs that bore
Her brother from her, even as one
From whom the light of life is gone,
Fell swooning on the cold curb-stone.

Then came the Tzar himself anon,
And his great war-horse pacing on,
Did stoutly neigh in lusty pride ;
But when he past beside that stone,
He stopt, and stoopt, and swerv'd aside.
There, all her fair white length o'erthrown,
The Tzar his own true wife espied,
And fast the bitter tears down ran,
As he call'd to his servant, Gouloban.

" Good Gouloban, my faithful friend,
In this thy trusty service prove ;

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From off thy milk-white horse descend,
And, as thou dost thy master love,
In thy true arms thy mistress take,
With whom to her tall tower go ;
And, God forgive thee for my sake,
But go not thou to Kossovo.
I will requite thee when again
I meet thee, if I be not slain.
Howbeit, I deem my doom at hand,
For the Turk is lord of half the land."

Down stept the trusty serving man,
Full fast his bitter tears down ran,
And sad was the heart of Gouloban.
He lifted up that drooping flower,
Lifted her on to his milk-white steed,
And rode with her to her tall tower,
As fast as he might speed.

There laid he her in linen bed,
And lowly laid her lovely head.
But o'er the airy morning smote,
Along the blowing breeze remote,
A solitary trumpet note.
Full well the milk-white war-horse knew
The music of that martial sound,
And in the courtyard paw'd the ground,

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And blithely from his nostrils blew
The morning mist. Then Gouloban
Adown the turret stairway ran,
He leapt to stirrup, he leapt to selle.
From fleeting hands he waved farewell;
Again he heard the trumpet blow,
And he rode back to Kossovo.

7

All when the misty morn was low,
And the rain was raining heavily
Two ravens came from Kossovo,
Flying along a lurid sky;
One after one, they perched upon
The palace of the great Lazar,
And sat upon the turret wall.
One 'gan croak, and one 'gan call,
"Is this the palace of the Tzar?
And is there never a soul inside?"

Was never a soul within the hall,
To answer to the raven's call,
Save Militza. She espied
The two black birds on the turret wall,
That all in the wind and rain did croak,
And thus the ravens she bespoke:

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" In God's great name, black ravens, say,
Whence came ye on the wind to-day ?
Is it from the plain of Kossovo ?
Hath the bloody battle broke ?
Saw ye the two armies there ?
Have they met ? And, friend or foe,
Which hath vanquisht ? How do they fare ? "
And the two black fowls replied :
" In God's great name, Militza, dame,
From Kossovo at dawn we came.
A bloody battle we espied :
We saw the two great armies there,
They have met, and ill they fare.
Fallen, fallen, fallen are
The Turkish and the Christian Tzar.
Of the Turks is nothing left ;
Of the Serbs a remnant rests,
Hackt and hewn, carved and cleft,
Broken shields, and bloody breasts."
And lo ! While yet the ravens spoke,
Up came the servant, Miloutine :
And he held his right hand, cleft
By a ghastly sabre stroke,
Bruis'd and bloody, in his left ;
Gasht with gashes seventeen,
Yawn'd his body where he stood,
And his horse was dripping blood.

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" O sorrow, sorrow, bitter woe
And sorrow, Miloutine ! " she said ;
" For now I know my lord is dead.
For, were he living, well I know
Thou hadst not left at Kossovo
Thy lord forsaken to the foe."
And Miloutine spake, breathing hard :
" Get me from horse : on cool greensward
Lay me, lay me, mistress mine :
A little water from the well
To bathe my wounds in water cold,
For they are deep and manifold ;
And touch my lip with rosy wine,
That I may speak before I die.
I would not die before I tell
The tale of how they fought and fell."
She got him from his bloody steed,
And wiped the death-drops from his brow,
And in the fresh grass laid him low ;
And washt his wounds in water cold,
For they were deep and manifold ;
Full ghastly did they gape and bleed :
She stanch'd them with her garment's fold,
And lightly held his body up,
And bathed his lips with rosy wine,
And all the while her tears down ran,
And dropt into the golden cup ;

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And still she question'd of the war ;
" O tell me, tell me, Miloutine,
Where fell the glorious Prince Lazar ?
Where are fallen my brothers nine ?
Where my father, Youg Bogdan ?
Where Milosch, where Vouk Brankovitch ?
And where Strahinia Banovitch ? '

Then when the servant, Miloutine,
Three draughts had drain'd of rosy wine,
Although his eyes were waxing dim,
A little strength came back to him.
He stood up on his feet, and, pale
And ghastly, thus began the tale :

" They will never return again,
Never return ! ye shall see them no more ;
Nor ever meet them within the door,
Nor hold their hands. Their hands are cold,
Their bodies bleach in bloody mould.
They are slain ! all of them slain !
And the maidens shall mourn, and the mothers deplore,
Heaps of dead heroes on battle plain.
Where they fell, there they remain,
Corpses stiff in their gore.
But their glory shall never grow old.

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Fallen, fallen, in mighty war,
Fallen, fighting about the Tzar,
Fallen, where fell our Lord Lazar!
Never more be there voice of cheer!
Never more be there song or dance!
Muffled be moon and star!
For broken now is the lance,
Shiver'd both shield and spear,
And shatter'd the scimitar.
And cleft is the golden crown,
And the sun of Serbia is down,
O'erthrown, o'erthrown, o'erthrown,
The roof and top of our renown,
Dead is the great Lazar!

"Have ye seen when the howling storm-wind takes
The topmost pine on a hoary rock,
Tugs at it, and tears, aud shakes, and breaks,
And tumbles it into the ocean?
So when this bloody day began,—
In the roaring battle's opening shock,
Down went the grey-hair'd Youg Bogdan,
And following him, the noblest man
That ever wore the silver crown
Of age, grown grey in old renown.

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One after one, and side by side,
Fighting, thy nine brothers died :
Each by other, brother brother
Following, till death took them all,
But of these nine the last to fall
Was Bocko. Him, myself, I saw,
Three awful hours—a sight of awe,
Here, and there, and everywhere,
And all at once, made manifest,
Like a wild meteor in a troubled air,
Whose motion never may be guest.
For over all the lurid rack
Of smoking battle, blazed and burn'd,
And stream'd and flasht,
Like flame before the wind upturn'd,
The great imperial ensign splasht
With blood of Turks : where'er he dasht
Amongst their bruised battalions, I
Saw them before him reel and fly :
As when a falcon from on high,
Pounce on a settle-down of doves,
That murmurs make in myrrhy groves,
Comes flying all across the sky,
And scatters them with instant fright ;
So flew the Turks to left and right,
Broken before him. Milosch fell,
Pursued by myriads down the dell,

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Upon Sitnitza's rushy brink,
Whose chilly waves will roll, I think,
So long as time itself doth roll,
Red with remorse that they roll o'er him.
Christ have mercy on his soul,
And blessèd be the womb that bore him !
Not alone he fell. Before him
Twelve thousand Turkish soldiers fell,
Slaughter'd in the savage dell,
His right hand was wet and red
With the blood that he had shed,
And in that red right hand he had
(Shorn from the shoulder sharp) the head
Of the Turkish Tzar, Murad.

" There resteth to Serbia a glory,
A glory that shall not grow old ;
There remaineth to Serbia a story,
A tale to be chanted and told !
They are gone to their graves grim and gory,
The beautiful, brave, and bold ;
But out of the darkness and desolation,
Of the mourning heart of a widow'd nation,
Their memory waketh an exultation !
Yea, so long as a babe shall be born,
Or there resteth a man in the land—
So long as a blade of corn

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Shall be reapt by a human hand—
So long as the grass shall grow
On the mighty plain of Kossovo—
So long, so long, even so,
Shall the glory of those remain,
Who this day in battle were slain.

" And as for what ye inquire
Of Vouk,—when the worm and mole
Are at work on his bones, may his soul
Eternally singe in hell-fire !
Curst be the womb that bore him !
Curst be his father before him !
Curst be the race and the name of him !
And foul as his sin be the fame of him !
For blacker traitor never drew sword—
False to his faith, to his land, to his lord !
And doubt ye, doubt ye, the tale I tell ?
Ask of the dead, for the dead know well ;
Let them answer ye, each from his mouldy bed,
For there is no falsehood among the dead :
And there be twelve thousand dead men know,
Who betray'd the Tzar at Kossovo."

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Chapter XIII

RETREAT: PRIZREND TO IPEK

The state of feeling at Prizrend can better be imagined than described; in this little corner of temporary safety were herded the Government, the diplomatic corps, and all the crowd of fugitives, waiting for they knew not what, and watching the death struggle of the heroic nation.

The situation was as black as the ravens who are, by legend, the bearers of ill tidings, and from out the dense clouds which were enveloping this last but momentary refuge, not even one small dim star of hope shone forth to comfort the many sinking hearts.

All help had failed; this army of martyrs was without ammunition and almost without food; around them their comrades were falling by thousands, their rich fields and vineyards were already overrun by the invaders, and their country, with all they held dear, was being inexorably wrested from their strong grasp;

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not because they were inferior in individual courage or strength, but rather because of the systematic pressure during these two months of a force immensely superior both in number and in engines of war.

They faced this martyrdom with the loftiness of a people nurtured in religious sentiments and in the age-long cult of great traditions, and possessing a sublime ideal of courage, duty and endurance.

It is symbolic of the immortality of the soul of the nation that they keep their legendary hero, Marko Kraljevitch, always before them as an undying incarnation of their national qualities.

One legend tells of Marko when hard pressed beating down a giant enemy with only a broken blade.

Another very pretty legend pictures a friendly falcon bringing a few drops of water in his beak, which sufficed to restore Marko when he was all but expiring.

Is not this the parable of the Serbian nation, simple in wants, but splendid in achievement?

The road to Monastir was now cut off, the Albanians were in revolt, five enemy nations, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Turkey and

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AUTOMOBILE BEING DUG OUT OF THE MUD.

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Albania, were on our heels pursuing us like bloodhounds on the scent of slaves.

The worst had come to the worst, so on the morning of the 20th we, with the diplomatic corps, left in advance of the crowd for Djakovitza, a small town over the Montenegrin frontier.

Beautiful weather was in our favour, and the day passed almost without incident. A broken bridge gave us some difficulty with the automobiles and caused much delay. The crossing of another bridge of peculiar Turkish construction, humped like a camel's back, was our only dangerous experience, since it had no protecting side walls to keep the motors from skidding over into the swift current of the White Drin. It had become a mere banality to be pulled out of the mud by oxen, as frequently happened.

The sun was bidding good-night to the valley as we entered Djakovitza, and were escorted to the house of the Mayor, who kindly offered us hospitality.

As we were now at the end of roads passable by automobiles, ours were destroyed so that the enemy should not make use of them. The chauffeurs were silent and sad, one of them

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crying bitterly, for they had learned to love the engines which had so nobly responded to their every call.

In the early morning of the 21st we left for Ipek in uncomfortably primitive springless carts; so thick was the mud on this uninteresting road that with difficulty the horses pulled through it. One bright spot, however, in that long and uncomfortable day remains fresh in my memory; the visit to the famous monastery of Vissoki Detchani, which was founded in the year 1330 by the King Stephan Detchanski, father of Tzar Douchan.

For centuries past pilgrims from all the Serbian countries have brought offerings to this holy shrine, and as kings have rivalled each other in the costliness of their gifts, so its treasures have now attained an inestimable value. This later on was a lure to the greedy invaders, who are now, according to their newspaper accounts, disputing over the spoils.

It is significant that, although the Turks had the custom of transforming all Christian churches into mosques, they never touched Detchani, and even the savage Albanians who surround it have always respected this holy place. It was only in the twentieth century with the

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advent of German kultur that the famous Detchani was despoiled.

After Detchani the road became more difficult; streams had overflowed their natural beds, bridges had been destroyed, and to avoid fording the dangerous streams the Montenegrin gendarmes guided us over a long and roundabout route, through forests and plains, where no carriage roads had ever existed.

All this took much time, so it was late evening when we arrived at the historical Patriarchate of Ipek, which was to be our temporary haven of rest. After a light supper we tumbled into bed, weary and worn, with aching bones.

This Patriarchate, having been the see of the first independent Serbian Patriarch, has occupied a dominant place in history since the beginning of the thirteenth century.

In the year 1689 Arsene Czernovitz, then Patriarch, was obliged to flee before one of the many Turkish invasions, and was followed by about 37,000 Serbian families; they passed over the Danube, and by the consent of the Austrian Emperor Leopold, occupied Syrmia, Backa and the Banat, then almost entirely uninhabited. Around their new Patriarchate, Karlovitz, the Serbs flourished for many years,

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till Austrian domination became as galling to them as that of the Turk had been.

The morning after our arrival (Monday, the 22nd), saw us early astir, for it was a great festival, the Slava day of our host, the Metropolitan, who, clad in the richest robes of his order, officiated at a long and elaborate ceremony in honour of his patron saint; his resonant voice, alternating with the singing of the men's choirs, filled the lofty church of the Patriarchate.

The Slava originated when the Serbian families first embraced Christianity. As they were loth to give up their little wooden household gods they were given, instead, the choice of a patron saint as protector against all evil. On the name day of the chosen saint, each family celebrates the Slava.

The religious service lasted three hours, after which, a few minutes before the sun reached the zenith, we assembled in the dining-room of the Patriarchate. A Slava feast had been laid according to time-honoured tradition, with the kolatch, a special cake made of wheat-flour, and another wheaten cake mixed with powdered sugar, chopped almonds, and other nuts; this is called "jito"

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MONASTRY OF IPEK.

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and is extremely good. After the guests had assembled a glass of wine was passed to each person, and with it a piece of kolatch, which had first been blessed by the priest ; then all the guests, rising, made the sign of the cross, and the Metropolitan, after a few words of welcome, invited the guests to drink to the Glory of God ; then my husband, as chief guest, thanked our kind and hospitable host and proposed the traditional toast, " For the Better Hour." Each guest offered his good wishes to the Metropolitan, and the social ceremony was finished.

Later, with a few Montenegrin friends who had been asked to meet us, we sat down to a plain but bounteous lunch, at which the seriousness of the situation was freely discussed. Two days before, the casket containing the relics of Stephan Nemanja, the first Serbian king, had been conveyed here by priests from the convent of Stoudenitza, and committed into the charge of the Metropolitan, who did not conceal his anxiety concerning the ultimate fate of this great national treasure. Until now the Turks and Albanians had respected this holy spot, but he feared that the latter, incited by the Austrians and Bul-

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garians, would massacre the Montenegrins and Serbians, and pillage this historic edifice.

Before night had fallen fourteen horses, with their Albanian leaders, were in the large garden of the Patriarchate, ready for our start in the morning. After a quiet dinner with the interesting Metropolitan, we went to bed to store up strength for our difficult and dangerous journey over the mountains.

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Chapter XIV

IPEK TO CETTINJE

It is easy to rise early in a saintly house where all are up at 4 o'clock in the morning; but it took long to arrange our bags, blankets and food on the pack-horses, and even though up at such an early hour, it was 7 o'clock of the 23rd when the big gates were opened and we, mounted on our restless ponies, reluctantly said our thanks and farewell to our kind and splendid host and passed out, one by one.

The Patriarchate lay on the extreme edge of the town, under the shadows of the great savage mountains, with the noisy Bistritza surging by. Crossing the bridge, it was long before we lost sight of the once peaceful but now tragic house, which had sheltered us for two nights and a day.

Often do the spirits of great events stride on before the events themselves; thus it was that, looking down on this now tranquil scene, our imagination pictured the sad and dramatic

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procession which in reality so soon followed in our wake: Serbian soldiers carrying on their shoulders the heavy casket with the relics of their first crowned king, driven forth into exile after so many centuries of venerated rest. The imposing figure of the saintly Metropolitan preceded them, and following the casket came the sorrowing priests holding lighted candles and chanting in a dreary monotone.

Thus passeth the glory of this world away.

A brilliant sun was shining, and its rays, refracted dazzlingly from the snow-topped mountains, almost blinded us. The road, cut out of the rock, was extremely narrow; below it yawned ravines and precipices so deep that we were forced to keep our eyes averted to avoid giddiness. One false step of the ponies at the sharp turning would have sent us to destruction. We were enraptured by the savage grandeur of this narrow gorge; all about us crags, mountains and precipices blended in a riot of colour almost unnatural.

In the early afternoon we came to a small plateau, where we could stand aside from that never-ending procession of humanity on foot, or mounted, and there for a few short moments we rested, eating a piece of bread, which was to be

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our only sustenance for the day. Then it was that the Albanians of our escort attracted my attention. In these tall, spare men, with such fine clear-cut features, one can see no sign of the savagery which is always accredited to the race. Their dress, made of white homespun cloth embroidered in black, gives them the appearance of clowns from a circus, especially as their heads are invariably shaved, leaving one long lock growing from the crown, where is placed a ridiculous little white cloth cap, shaped like a saucer. Their trousers are shaped to the leg, but as they only appear to come as far as the hips one has always the uncomfortable idea that they are slipping off. A broad sash does, however, hold them in place, a sash in which they are popularly supposed to carry a whole armament of weapons exclusively used for offence.

Later, as the road became more difficult, we all began to lag from fatigue; nor could we then understand why our Albanians were so insistent on hurrying us along. As we had been steadily climbing all the day we were now very high among the snows, which made progress difficult enough; but later, after the setting of the sun; the cold was intense, the road

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turned to glass, and riding was out of the question. Darkness fell, and there came over us a feeling of terror and of utter helplessness; we seemed but pygmies among those ferocious mountains, and the rushing water, roaring in our ears, bewildered our very senses.

The ponies were falling and scrambling, and finding a footing only to fall again. For the poor pack-horses it was more dangerous, since when they fell the pack overbalanced, pulling them perilously near the brink of the precipice; then the pack had to be taken off, and when the poor beasts were on their feet again the repacking commenced. We ourselves were but crawling, for progress was painful and almost impossible.

The "han" [1] we were to have reached in the afternoon was not yet in sight; in moments of despair the feeling came over us that we could not go on, that we must lie down in the snow, perhaps never to rise; but at these weak moments that fierce and wonderful instinct of self-preservation took hold of us and, pushed on by an invisible force, we continued our way under the cynical gaze of a clear cold moon, that

[1] A Turkish word which means a refuge, a shanty, usually in isolated places.

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watched smilingly our desperate struggle against savage Nature.

About 9 o'clock a faint ray shone out from the distance, a beacon light to cheer our sinking hearts; Bieloukha, our "han," was now a reality, and a new hope strengthened us.

Dirty and wretched as it proved to be, even the one small room, in which our party of ten was to pass the night, seemed a paradise. On the hearth was a smoking fire which made our eyes smart; the big kettle which travelled everywhere with us was soon boiling, and warmed by a cup of good hot tea, we rolled ourselves in blankets and slept the sleep of the innocent on the cold hard floor, thankful to have the shelter of a roof, but sad to think of the many less fortunate, with snow for their only bed, and nothing above them but the starlit sky.

With the first rose flush of the morning all our little world was astir, for it was a long and tedious task to load the pack-horses. That accomplished, we started the climb to the summit of the great Tchakor mountain. The snow was deep, and the ascent abrupt; walking was compulsory, and we all had our tumbles in the snow, which, however, caused no damage.

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Midday found us at the summit, where was unfolded before us the most beautiful winter panorama upon which it has ever been my privilege to look: a dazzling sun shone on the pure iridescent snow; below us floated a sea of white clouds, and beyond lay the beautiful valley of the Lim, where, glistening like chains of silver against the dark forest green, wound many small streams, hurriedly rushing to lose themselves in the larger rivers.

We paused, uplifted by the sensation of height and solitude; here, where one felt God and Nature in such absolute purity and greatness, it was unbelievable that all the intense human suffering about us, and in so many lands, could have found its cause and beginning in the minds of men with God-given intelligence.

But "time and the hour run through the roughest day," and as the descent of this mountain, which looms more than 6,000 feet high, had to be accomplished before dark, the moments were too precious to be spent in reverie.

The descent was very difficult and fatiguing, and many horses of the fugitive procession fell over the precipice. One poor little donkey was led by a peasant woman, while a man kept him

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in the path of safety by firmly holding his tail. Hanging at the little beast's sides were the familiar twin market baskets, in which I supposed they were carrying their belongings, but a closer inspection revealed two pairs of bright eyes, peeping out of woollen shawls, and I understood that this was a united family group, mother and father, babes in the baskets, and that eminently useful member of the family, the donkey.

Four hours of this uncomfortable walking, first in deep snow, and then as we neared the base in deep mud, brought us to Velika, a tiny village on the Lim. There we made a short halt, refreshing ourselves with bread, kaimak (a sort of cheese) and Turkish coffee.

We were told that Andrievitza could be reached before dark, so in spite of nerves a bit shaken by all the different emotions which had been brought into play, we pushed straight on. The problem of fording the river Lim at once confronted us. One of the Albanians was sent on to test the depth, and he found that, if we drew our feet up to the level of the horses' necks the water would not reach us. So our caravan soon reached the other bank, only a little wet from the splashing.

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With a good road and the beautiful scenery of the valley time slipped pleasantly away till the sun set, when a heavy fog enveloped us, so dense, that two of our party were separated from the caravan, and much time was wasted before they could be found.

Fortunately, for we had strayed far from our route, gendarmes from Andrievitza came out to meet us, and since a landslide had destroyed a part of the road in front, they guided us to a " han " near by. In this terrible hovel we were again crowded into one small room, and as the window had no glass the penetrating dampness chilled us to the marrow.

The nearness of Andrievitza and the certainty of a house, food, and the comfort of taking off our clothes and making ourselves clean got us up very early. It was difficult to pass the damaged road, but before midday the town authorities met us, and we were taken to the house of a prominent citizen. Soon appeared a hot dish of meat and vegetables, which was a veritable feast, and in comfortable rooms we rested until the next morning.

Automobiles from the Montenegrin court were to have met us here, but a snowstorm had made the roads impassable for them. So,

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much as both we and the horses needed rest, delay was out of the question, for snow was now falling heavily on the great mountains which we had yet to cross.

Here, in the care of the priests and the mayor, we left a boy of twelve years, whom we had brought from Mitrovitza, to save from the fate of other boys who had been taken out of the country by the Germans. It was sad to leave the brave lad alone, among strangers, but we were following the wishes of his parents, who, no doubt, rejoined him later in their flight.

Leaving Andrievitza the morning of the 26th we passed a fatiguing and uneventful day, and slept that night at a miserable "han." Snow fell heavily, and when we started forth on the morning of the 27th the cold was intense. Two gendarmes came to guide us over a bad stretch of road and over a broken bridge.

Stopping at a peasant hut to warm our almost frozen hands and feet we saw, lying by a meagre fire, a Serbian soldier dying of pneumonia. Poor fellow! but at least his retreat was to end in a beautiful land, where war and suffering are unknown.

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One of the most pathetic sights, and the one which tugged the hardest at my heart-strings, was to see the poor wounded soldiers, weak and helpless, climbing these mountains, exposed to the elements day and night, with nothing but bread to eat, and very little of that.

The horses had now been led far down the river bank to find a safe fording place, as the current was swift and strong. We, walking through the deep snow, at last reached the bridge, which had been almost totally destroyed. The gradual approach to it was missing, which necessitated climbing to a great height up a roughly made ladder, which, when surmounted, brought us in face of another danger, for the only foothold was a single beam, from which one false step would have precipitated us into the river below. Once over this we were on the main road, where later the horses joined us.

Another hour of difficult climbing brought us to a hut, where we stopped to warm ourselves and where we found a despatch rider, who announced that automobiles would meet us at Garantchichte. We were now ascending the great Trehvniak mountain, which is almost the height of the Tchakor; good roads, however, made it a much easier climb.

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About 3 o'clock in the afternoon, as we were nearing Garantchichte, the welcome sound of automobile horns was heard. Here we parted from the ponies, which had been requisitioned for us by the Governor of Ipek, and sent them back with their leaders.

Now, in automobiles, the descent commenced on a broad and splendid macadamised road five metres wide. As we flew down the long winding grade, with the frozen snow driven by an icy wind against our faces, which it pricked like needles, we held our breath and looked away from the immeasurable abyss which gaped below. Of all the dangers we had faced, none had sent such terror to my heart as did this swooping spiral descent, for it seemed that—

> "In the lowest deep a lower deep,
> Still threatening to devour me,"

opened wide.

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Chapter XV

CETTINJE TO SCUTARI

Hotel de l'Europe, Podgoritza, sounds very civilised, and very civilised it seemed to us, after the miserable "hans" in which we had been forced to sleep; rooms to ourselves, and fairly good beds were by comparison certainly a luxury.

The hotel was situated on a large square, and, looking out of my windows the next morning I saw arriving innumerable pack-horses, each burdened with two wooden boxes and led by a Serbian soldier. This aroused my curiosity, and on inquiry I was told there were 200 horses and that they were carrying 70,000,000 francs in gold for the Serbian Government. So heavy was their burden that they had taken three days more than we to come from Ipek.

After lunch, again in automobiles, we proceeded to Cettinje. Here at the Grand Hotel, a very big name for so simple an edifice, we spent four days in rest and recuperation.

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This pretty little capital built among the rocks gives the impression of marvellous cleanliness, and reminded me of the immaculate toy houses I built in my childhood. The Palace is large, but modest and simple in appearance, and the legations are, for the most part, very fine buildings.

There is a pretty story which says that God, when making the earth, sent angels to distribute the rivers, forests, and mountains, but the angel charged to carry the stones had the misfortune to tear her apron and all the stones fell on Montenegro.

The men of this country are magnificent and walk with an air of pride. The costumes of both men and women, especially those for fête days, are superb, and almost always embroidered in gold or silk. The men wear a very long scarf wound round the body in a manner which allows them to carry in it pistols, a knife, a pipe, and a yatagan. The characteristic pork-pie cap worn by both men and women is of fascinating interest, because of its details, each of which is symbolic. Its broad border of black silk is a token of mourning for the defeat on Kossovo, 1389; its crown is crimson to signify the rivers of blood which have been shed on the

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Black Mountains since then, and the five centuries of Montenegro's stormy history are represented by the five gold bands on the crown, which surround the initials of the King, H. I (in Cryillic characters).

The predominant idea in the mind of the fugitive is one of unresting movement, and though in this charming little mountain nest, if anywhere, we would have liked to tarry, the morning of the 3rd of December found us on our way to Lieva-Rieka, on the Lake of Scutari where is a winter residence of the Royal family. Here a steam launch took us across the lake, so renowned for its beautiful scenery; through the mists loomed the great Mount Lovtchen, Nature's famous fortress, which for centuries protected Montenegro from her enemies. Later came into view Taraboch, the mountain defence of Scutari, dark, barren and sinister. This was the prize the Montenegrins fought for in the Balkan War of 1912, and won at the point of the bayonet.

In Scutari we were installed in the house of a Turkish Serb, a lady of wealth, according to local standards, and of strikingly picturesque appearance. Her week-day costume was strictly Turkish, with voluminous black satin

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trousers, coloured bolero jacket and sash, and one heard the clatter of her wooden sandals as she pottered about the courtyard and garden smoking, literally, like a Turk, all day long. So much for the week, but Sunday was signalised by a sartorial revolution, for the lady then appeared magnificent in a black velvet gown with flowing train.

We realised that Scutari could not long remain a place of safety, nor would it be possible for any length of time to feed the 150,000 refugees now there, as well as the Government, the diplomats and the remnants of the army pouring in every day, some by the route we had taken, others by a shorter, but far more difficult one, straight across Albania.

San Giovanni di Medua, the small port on the Adriatic, was the only place where the Italians could land the food sent by the Allies for the Serbians, and it was so harrassed by the Austrian Navy, and so many ships were sunk, it became necessary to cut the soldiers' rations down to almost starvation point. There were also tragic moments when the rations seemed about to cease altogether, but fortunately in the nick of time fresh supplies arrived.

By the kindness of the municipal authorities

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we had a little bread and meat enough for one meal a day ; cabbages were to be had, and also macaroni and rice in small quantities.

Here the painful patience in delays was our lot, while we anxiously awaited a reply to the vital question, could we be taken across to Italy ? Italy, in reality so near, but because of the Austrian menace, so very, very far.

The days passed slowly, as we sat shivering around the picturesque brazier, more a thing of beauty than of use and warmth. About 12 o'clock of every day Austrian aeroplanes methodically visited the town and dropped bombs on the arsenal, killing a few more of those of our brave soldiers, who had until now escaped death at their hands. Hearing the well-known sound, and quite regardless of the danger, people ran excitedly out into the streets and, with faces turned skyward, and eyes and mouth wide open, watched with keenest interest the manœuvres of these birds of prey.

In the broad streets of Scutari the houses of the richer class stand in large gardens surrounded by high walls, and the only entrance is by heavy prison-like doors with massive iron locks. The verdure of the spring must be wonderful here because of the dampness, and

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I am told the place is renowned for the beauty of its violets; winter, unfortunately, turns the town into a morass. Walking was a misery rather than a pleasure, but we did, however, go out often to see the soldiers in their camp, and to the fortress, which commanded a magnificent view of the lake, of the great mountain Taraboch, and of the river Boyana.

These fortifications, now mere ruins, date from the eleventh century, when Scutari was the capital of a large Serbian province; tradition says that during four years many vain attempts were made to build the walls, all failing until the princely builders, obeying the behest of the veele, immured a young woman alive within the foundations. This weird story, unknown to the folk-lore of Albania, has been handed down from that time in the beautiful Serbian epic, "The Building of Skadar."

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Chapter XVI

THE BUILDING OF SKADAR (SCUTARI).[1]

Brothers three combined to build a fortress,
Brothers three, the brothers Mrnyavtchevitch,
King Vukashin was the eldest brother;
And the second was Uglesha-Voyvoda;
And the third, the youngest brother Goyko.
Full three years they labour'd at the fortress,
Skadar's fortress on Boyana's river;
Full three years three hundred workmen labour'd.
Vain th' attempt to fix the wall's foundation.
Vainer still to elevate the fortress:
Whatsoe'er at eve had raised the workmen
Did the veela raze ere dawn of morning.
When the fourth year had begun its labours,
Lo! the veela from the forest-mountain
Call'd—"Thou King Vukashin! vain thine efforts!
Vain thine efforts—all thy treasures wasting!

[1] The following poem is reprinted here from Sir John Bowring's "Serbian Popular Poetry." London. 1827.

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Never, never, wilt thou build the fortress,
If thou find not two same-titled beings,
If thou find not Stoyan and Stoyana : [1]
And these two—these two young twins so loving,
They must be immured in the foundation.
Thus alone will the foundations serve thee :
Thus alone can ye erect your fortress."
When Vukashin heard the veela's language,
Soon he call'd to Dessimir, his servant :
" Listen, Dessimir, my trusty servant !
Thou has been my trusty servant ever,
Thou shalt be my son from this day onward,
Fasten thou my coursers to my chariot :
Load it with six lasts of golden treasures :
Travel through the whole wide world, and bring me,
Bring me back those two same-titled beings :
Bring me back that pair of twins so loving :
Bring me hither Stoyan and Stoyana :
Steal them, if with gold thou canst not buy them.
Bring them here to Skadar on Boyana.
We'll inter them in the wall's foundation :

[1] Stoyan means Constans, Stoyana = Constance.

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So the wall's foundations will be strengthened :
So we shall build up our Skadar's fortress."

Dessimir obey'd his master's mandate ;
Fasten'd, straight, the horses to the chariot ;
Fill'd it with six lasts of golden treasures ;
Through the whole wide world the trusty servant
Wander'd — asking for these same-named beings—
For the twins—for Stoyan and Stoyana ;
Full three years he sought them—sought them vainly ;
Nowhere could he find these same-named beings :
Nowhere found he Stoyan and Stoyana.
Then he hasten'd homeward to his master ;
Gave the king his horses and his chariot ;
Gave him his six lasts of golden treasures :
"Here, my sov'reign, are thy steeds and chariot :
Here thou hast thy lasts of golden treasures :
Nowhere could I find those same-named beings :
Nowhere found I Stoyan and Stoyana."

When Vukashin had dismiss'd his servant,
Straight he call'd his builder-master Rado.
Rado call'd on his three hundred workmen ;

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And they built up Skadar on Boyana ;
But, at even did the veela raze it :
Vainly did they raise the wall's foundation ;
Vainly seek to build up Skadar's fortress.
And the veela, from the mountain-forest,
Cried, " Vukashin, listen ! listen to me !
Thou dost spill thy wealth, and waste thy labour :
Vainly seek'st to fix the wall's foundations ;
Vainly seek'st to elevate the fortress.
Listen now to me ! Ye are three brothers :
Each a faithful wife at home possesses :—
Her who comes to-morrow to Boyana,
Her who brings the rations to the workmen—
Her immure deep, down, in the wall's foundations :—
So shall the foundations fix them firmly ;
So shall thou erect Boyana's fortress."

When the king Vukashin heard the veela,
Both his brothers speedily he summon'd :
" Hear my words, now hear my words, my brothers !
From the forest-hill the veela told me,
That we should no longer waste our treasures
In the vain attempt to raise the fortress
On a shifting, insecure foundation.

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Said the veela of the forest-mountain,
Each of you a faithful wife possesses ;
Each a faithful bride that keeps your dwellings :
Her who to the fortress comes to-morrow,
Her who brings their rations to the workmen—
Her immure within the wall's foundations ;
So will the foundations bear the fortress :
So Boyana's fortress be erected.
Now then, brothers ! in God's holy presence
Let each swear to keep the awful secret ;
Leave to chance whose fate 'twill be to-morrow
First to wend her way to Skadar's river."
And each brother swore, in God's high presence,
From his wife to keep the awful secret.

When the night had on the earth descended,
Each one hastened to his own white dwelling ;
Each one shared the sweet repast of evening ;
Each one sought his bed of quiet slumber.

Lo ! there happen'd then a wond'rous marvel !
First, Vukashin on his oath he trampled,
Whisp'ring to his wife the awful secret :
" Shelter thee ! my faithful wife ! be shelter'd !
Go not thou to-morrow to Boyana !
Bring not to the workmen food to-morrow !
Else, my fair ! thy early life 'twill cost thee :

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And beneath the walls they will immure thee!"
On his oath, too, did Uglesha trample!
And he gave his wife this early warning:
"Be not thou betray'd, sweet love! to danger!
Go not thou to-morrow to Boyana!

Carry not their rations to the workmen!
Else in earliest youth thy friend might lose thee!
Thou might be immured in the foundation!"

Faithful to his oath, young Goyko whisper'd
Not a breath to warn his lovely consort.

When the morning dawn'd upon the morrow,
All the brothers roused them at the day-break,
And each sped, as wont, to the Boyana.
Now, behold! two young and noble women;
They—half-sisters—they, the eldest sisters—
One is bringing up her snow-bleached linen,
Yet once more in summer sun to bleach it.
See! she comes on to the bleaching meadows;
There she stops—she comes not one step further.
Lo! the second, with a red-clay pitcher;
Lo! she comes—she fills it at the streamlet;
There she talks with other women—lingers—
Yes! she lingers—comes not one step farther.
Goyko's youthful wife at home is tarrying,

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For she has an infant in the cradle
Not a full moon old ; the little nursling :
But the moment of repast approaches ;
And her aged mother then bestirs her ;
Fain would call the serving-maid, and bid her
Take the noon-tide meal to the Boyana.
" Nay, not so ! " said the young wife of Goyko ;
" Stay, sit down in peace, I pray thee, mother !
Rock the little infant in his cradle :
I myself will bear the food to Skadar.
In the sight of God it were a scandal,
An affront and shame among all people,
If, of three, no one were found to bear it."

So she staid at home, the aged mother,
And she rock'd the nursling in the cradle.
Then arose the youthful wife of Goyko ;
Gave them the repast, and bade them forward.
Call'd around her all the serving-maidens ;
When they reach'd Boyana's flowing river,
They were seen by Mrnyavtchevitch Goyko.
On his youthful wife, heart-rent, he threw him ;
Flung his strong right arm around her body ;
Kiss'd a thousand times her snowy forehead ;
Burning tears stream'd swiftly from his eyelids,
And he spoke in melancholy language :
" O my wife, my own ! my full heart's-sorrow !

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Didst thou never dream that thou must perish ?
Why hast thou our little one abandoned ?
Who will bathe our little one, thou absent ?
Who will bare the breast to feed the nursling ? "
More, and more, and more, he fain would utter ;
But the king allow'd it not. Vukashin,
By her white hand seizes her, and summons
Master Rado,—he the master-builder ;
And he summons his three hundred workmen.

But the young espoused one smiles, and dreams it
All a laughing jest,—no fear o'ercame her.
Gathering round her, the three hundred workmen
Pile the stones and pile the beams about her.
They have now immured her to the girdle.

Higher rose the walls and beams, and higher ;
Then the wretch first saw the fate prepared her,
And she shriek'd aloud in her despair ;
In her woe implored her husband's brothers :
" Can ye think of God ?—have ye no pity ?
Can ye thus immure me, young and healthful ?"
But in vain, in vain were her entreaties ;
And her brothers left her thus imploring.

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Shame and fear succeeded then to censure,
And she piteously invoked her husband :
" Can it, can it be, my lord and husband,
That so young, thou, reckless, would'st immure
me ?
Let us go and seek my aged mother :
Let us go—my mother she is wealthy :
She will buy a slave,—a man or woman,
To be buried in the wall's foundations."

When the mother-wife—the wife and mother,
Found her earnest plaints and prayers
neglected,
She address'd herself to Neimar Rado :
" In God's name, my brother, Neimar Rado,
Leave a window for this snowy bosom,
Let this snowy bosom heave it freely ;
When my voiceless Yovo shall come near me,
When he comes, O let him drain my bosom ! '
Rado bade the workmen all obey her,
Leave a window for that snowy bosom,
Let that snowy bosom heave it freely,
When her voiceless Yovo shall come near her,
When he comes, he'll drink from out her
bosom.
Once again she cried to Neimar Rado,
" Neimar Rado ! In God's name, my brother !

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Leave for these mine eyes a little window,
That these eyes may see our own white dwelling,
When my Yovo shall be brought toward me,
When my Yovo shall be carried homeward."
Rado bade the workmen all obey her,
Leave for those bright eyes a little window,
That her eyes may see her own white dwelling,
When they bring her infant Yovo to her,
When they take the infant Yovo homeward.

So they built the heavy wall about her,
And then brought the infant in his cradle,
Which a long, long while his mother suckled.
Then her voice grew feeble—then was silent;
Still the stream flow'd forth and nursed the infant:
Full a year he hung upon her bosom;
Still the stream flow'd forth—and still it floweth.
Women, when the life-stream dries within them,
Thither come—the place retains its virtue—
Thither come, to still their crying infants!

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Chapter XVII

RETREAT: SCUTARI TO ALESSIO

After ten long days at Scutari, during which the situation became more and more discouraging, we started again on the forward march toward our promised land of refuge.

The possibility of leaving from San Giovanni di Medua had been out of the question these many days, since the Austrians were now firing on and sinking all craft in these waters, even fishing boats. The Italian Government, by wireless, promised us a torpedo-boat to cross in, but from Durazzo; this necessitated passing through Albania, and facing even more difficulties and dangers than we had yet experienced.

So, on the morning of the 14th of December, our party, on Serbian horses, and with Serbian cavalry escort, started for Alessio. For me, there was a small open carriage, apparently a relic out of Noah's Ark, and which I feared would collapse like the famous "one-hoss shay" before it had served my purpose.

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We should have reached our destination in the afternoon, but rain which came down in torrents transformed the road into a sea of mud, through which the horses literally swam; darkness fell, and we took shelter in a miserable house at Barbaloush, one of those combinations of barn, stable, and house, where the animal world commodiously occupy the ground floor, and the family climbing up an outside ladder seek their perches above. The room into which we were ushered, after frantic gymnastic efforts on the slippery ladder, looked exactly like the attic of an unfinished house; not one piece of furniture was there to break the spell of absolute emptiness. In the middle, on a large flat stone blazed a cheerful wood fire. Neither chimney nor windows existed, none were needed, for ample ventilation was afforded by large gaping spaces, between the flooring-boards, which also gratified us with a view of high life below stairs.

Cross-legged on the floor, or uncomfortably squatting on our hard bags, we must have made a grim spectacle, in the fire-lit gloom; sodden with rain, and silent from hopelessness, we were aroused from our general depression, by the entrance of our taciturn host, with a large dish

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of rice ; this we ate under the fixed gaze of his entire family, who had followed him into the room, and stood motionless in a row, according to Albanian etiquette. Our natural embarrassment was relieved by the occasional dropping of a spoon or fork through the gaps of the floor, at which hysterical flutterings ensued below, and much merriment above, for there is both comedy and tragedy in this nomad life.

Piling big logs on the fire and grouped as closely as possible around its comforting warmth, we rolled ourselves in blankets preliminary to sleeping on the floor.

Below all was quiet, for the animal world was asleep ; but the first peep of dawn was heralded by an aggressive cock ; other members of the feathered world took up the refrain, the horses whinnied for their breakfast, piggy grunted his disapproval, and thus, with different manifestations, Nature, animals, and man, shook off the dreamy lethargy of the night, and the stir o. the day commenced.

The sun, hidden for so many days, came forth in a blaze of glory which was fast drying up the muddy road. It was a beautiful country through which we were passing, but all the ength of the road to Alessio our hearts were

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tortured by the sight of the misery of the refugees, soldiers, and prisoners. No roof had protected them from the drenching rain, and it was pathetic to see them grouped around fires made from small twigs, trying to dry their wet clothes and blankets.

A few hours' march brought us to a ramshackle wooden bridge over the Drim by which we entered Alessio. Two rooms in a large house were allotted to us, and after another meal of rice, we went out to see the town. In the bazaar the crafty shopkeepers were improving the shining hour, for passing refugees and soldiers were paying as much as twenty francs in French gold (Serbian money not being accepted) for a piece of bread. Nothing speaks more forcibly for the instinctive peacefulness and honesty of the Serbian soldier than the fact that even under these trying circumstances, and no matter how hungry and weary, he passed by shops displaying food and tobacco without making any attempt to take either by force; this and his many other good qualities will reap their reward when time and God give judgment.

Rain and wind kept us another day at Alessio, where from the window I watched that dreary,

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ceaseless procession of refugees, soldiers, and prisoners; refugees in every conceivable sort of dress, hat and covering, soldiers in tattered uniforms, and many barefooted; but perhaps the most pitiable of all were the Austrian prisoners taken one year before, and now with their worn-out clothes, insufficiently covered.

In this motley crowd mutual help was the unwritten rule, for enmity and race hatred were forgotten, swept aside by the bigger idea of combining forces in the desperate struggle for life. How many of these did win through God only knows.

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Chapter XVIII

ALESSIO TO ICHMI

The next morning, the 17th, with Essad Pasha's gendarmes (askers) for protection and as guides we started forth again. The carriage had been sent back to Scutari, and mounted on one of the Serbian horses, with a wooden Albanian saddle, I took my place in line with the others of our party.

In the environs of Alessio we passed through a wonderful forest of ash trees, of extraordinary height. For a few miles there was still an excuse for a road, but later all traces even of footpaths were missing, and the horses were knee-deep in mud and water for two or three hours, when we were brought up by a river.

Fording is the usual method of crossing rivers in Albania, bridges, even where they once existed, had long since been swept off the face of the waters, leaving only vague memories behind them; this had been the case with the

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bridge here, and so, to take its place, there was a primitive ferry boat, made from trunks of trees crudely hollowed out; two of these had been fastened together side by side, to give the necessary width to take horses over; four only could go at a time. Getting them into the ferry was a long and tedious process, in which the Serbian soldiers displayed super-human patience, and for their trouble often had a ducking in the stream; so it was early afternoon before we were all landed safely on the opposite bank.

Later on we came to the Mati, a very wide river with a strong current. Here the same programme was enacted, only with more difficulties because of a steep, abrupt bank, from which the horses could not find a sure footing in the dugouts, and sometimes went clean over into the water; they then were forced to swim across.

Darkness was fast coming on, but once safely over, the askers took us to an Albanian hut, where we passed the night. I feel sure that the presence of our fourteen fearless soldiers, with guns and knives, was all that saved us to tell the tale; and even so, the solitude and isolation of our position gave us a creepy

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feeling of insecurity, which robbed us of sleep. However, morning found us all there, and still in possession of our belongings, with the exception of a few pairs of overshoes, trustingly left outside to dry.

Albania I shall remember as a land of sunshine, for from Alessio to Durazzo not a cloud appeared to dim the glory; starting forth on the morning of the 18th, on what we were told would be the most difficult day of all our retreat, our spirits were so exhilarated by the mountain air and brilliant sun, that dangers and difficulties dwindled from mountains to mole-hills before our buoyant cheerfulness. Soon, however, the inevitable river obstructed our onward way, and was crossed with the usual screaming and squabbling; on the other side we found ourselves in a terrible marsh, through which the soldiers and horses laboured heavily for two hours.

At last, on firm footing, the caravan stopped to give both horses and men a well-earned rest; as I passed a group of soldiers sitting on the ground eating their black bread, I heard them laughing and singing gaily as they played like children with our French bulldog, Ki-ki, who adored them. Such was the spirit of the

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Serbians, which four years of hardship and fighting had not availed to break.

Resuming our way along the bank of another river, this time the Imchi, we travelled on contentedly until beyond a beautiful forest, the much-dreaded dugout suddenly appeared again, to remind us that this was a day bristling with obstacles. Here, all the horses swam across, and were with great difficulty dragged up the almost perpendicular bank.

Striking was the contrast between one bank and the other; from an absolute wilderness the mere crossing of the river brought us into semi-civilisation, for here were roads, fields, fences, and—sight most attractive to hungry wanderers—a little ramshackle stall where a wily Turk, with an eye to the main chance, was selling boiled eggs, bread and coffee, at a handsome profit.

Our road lay now for a short time through a beautiful stretch of low country, separated from the Adriatic by a chain of hills of living rock; just visible on the very topmost peak of one of these craggy masses was the little hamlet of Ichmi, where we were to pass the night. How to reach it was the seemingly insoluble problem of the moment, but, needs must when

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the devil drives, and our devil was named necessity; so the horses went on scrambling like goats up this pathless side of the rock, and as if animated by a human purpose, brought us triumphantly to the top, just as on the western horizon the sun sank, flaming, into the still blue Adriatic. All thought of the discomforts and dangers of our journey vanished before the immensity of the gorgeous scene, and the fiery reds had turned to dim blue purple on the horizon before we entered our little one-roomed, windowless cabin perched on the highest point of rock, where we were to sleep.

Warm as it was outside, here was the familiar fire on the hearth, symbol in every land and in every epoch, of home and family life; but the night, irresistible in its beauty, drew us again outside, where, sitting about on the rocks we remained in reverie. Below us glimmered the fires of our soldiers, lighting up fitfully the animated groups clustered about them, now unusually animated, because for many of these men it was their first view of the sea.

Long I sat there under the calm and peaceful spell of the clear untroubled moon; above me

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the starry firmament was following its unchanging religious order; but around me, below me, and in many countries chaotic disorder, tyrannic cruelty, and suffering, were wringing from man the agonising cry of man's Redeemer, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Has He forsaken His children, or is He letting them learn in that realistic and terrible school of experience the lesson of human brotherhood, of liberty and order? I had witnessed a powerful but brutal and misguided nation imposing its idea of "Might makes Right" on the weak; I had been an actor in a great living drama, the agony and crucifixion of a nation; I had seen its bleeding wounds, and the calm resolute endurance of its martyrdom, and I thought with sorrow of all those left by the wayside in the valley of the shadow of death; almost could I see them beneath this beautiful cold moon, innumerable as the stars above them, and rigid in the dreadful placidity of their last sleep.

These are the martyrs of the world's march, and their souls will bring about the resurrection of the race. Serbia, with the other small martyred nations, will come to her own at last; the brotherhood of all races will be the lesson

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learned by the world from its great sacrifice, for after all there is but one race, humanity, destined to God's own golden age, and the very stones about me whisper that there will reign,

"On earth peace, good will toward men."

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Chapter XIX

ICHMI TO BRINDISI

Sunrise over the high Albanian mountains behind us was a pleasure well worth rising early for, and soon after commenced the abrupt descent, as sudden as the ascent of the evening before had been; however, this time there were paths, and although sore and shaken, we were soon down in the valley, passing through a marshy jungle which almost proved our undoing. One of the horses dropped from exhaustion, and lacking the necessary strength to pull himself out, sank in the mud until only his head was visible; mercifully he died even before the soldiers could shoot him to put an end to his misery. This sad incident cast a gloom over us all.

Hours had been spent in passing through this slough of despond, and again we commenced climbing by easy ascents to a passable road. Here in the perspective a marvellous panorama stretched before our astonished eyes; the sur-

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prise was indeed tremendous, for on all the hills about were Serbian camps and bivouacs, laid out in orderly lines, with horses picketed or turned loose to graze on the short herbage. We had come upon that part of the Serbian army which, while trying to force its way down to Monastir, had been cut off by the Bulgarians, and had retreated into Albania by way of El Bassan and Tirana. They were about 20,000 strong, and had about 5,000 horses.

Here at Chiack we left behind us the trackless routes and struck the good macadamised road direct to Durazzo. Meeting a long procession of army wagons carrying bags of flour, it gave me a thrill of joy to see on the sacks, in big black letters, "New York," "St. Louis," etc., and to know that my country was providing this valiant army with its staple food.

Serbian officers came out from Durazzo to meet us, and at nightfall of the 19th we arrived at the hotel, which although offering no comfort, at least gave us food, rooms and beds, inexpressibly welcome, for since Scutari, the vagabond life we had led had deprived us of all comforts whatsoever.

The beautiful weather had run its allotted span, for we awakened on the 20th, to find a

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violent gale blowing, which prevented a ship coming from Brindisi for us.

From the near-by fort the cannon were continually roaring, firing at supposed enemy submarines. These warlike alarms, combined with the howling of the wind, did not act as bromide on overstrained nerves; however, faith and hope are both stimulant and sedative to the refugee, and so we possessed our souls in patience.

The next day I went out to see the town, visiting the palace of that ephemeral ruler, the Prince of Wied, now occupied by Essad Pasha, Governor of Albania. I also went down to the harbour, which presented a most desolate appearance, the funnels and masts of many sunken ships showing above the water, as evidence of Austrian bombardment.

Rain having calmed the sea we made our preparations for departure that night. The handsome, stalwart soldiers of our escort, their task finished, came one by one and bade us farewell, with the splendid courtesy of their race.

Under the cover of darkness we were escorted to the jetty, where the captain of the port received us. As the Italian destroyer could not venture near, she was to give, far out,

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one quick flash of green light as signal of her arrival, on which we were to put out to her in small boats. The night air was soft and warm, and the absence of stars or moon, or any light, wrapt us in an atmosphere of mystery. Fishing boats were rocking on the waves close to the pier, and the lapping of the water against their sides was all that broke the death-like stillness of our watch. As the hours wore on the tension increased, until it seemed that our vigil was to endure the night through.

At the blackest moment, when hope was fast dying, one green flash pierced out of the far distance; without delay we took to the small boats; a grey ship on a black night is not an easy object to find, but after a long fruitless search, and when hope was again waning, another venturesome green flash located the destroyer, after which we were soon aboard. Pounding ahead at express train speed, three hours brought us, with our escort of two destroyers into Brindisi harbour, where we landed among those grim monuments of war, the great Italian dreadnoughts, and came to the end of our enforced flight in the grey of a cheerless December dawn.

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